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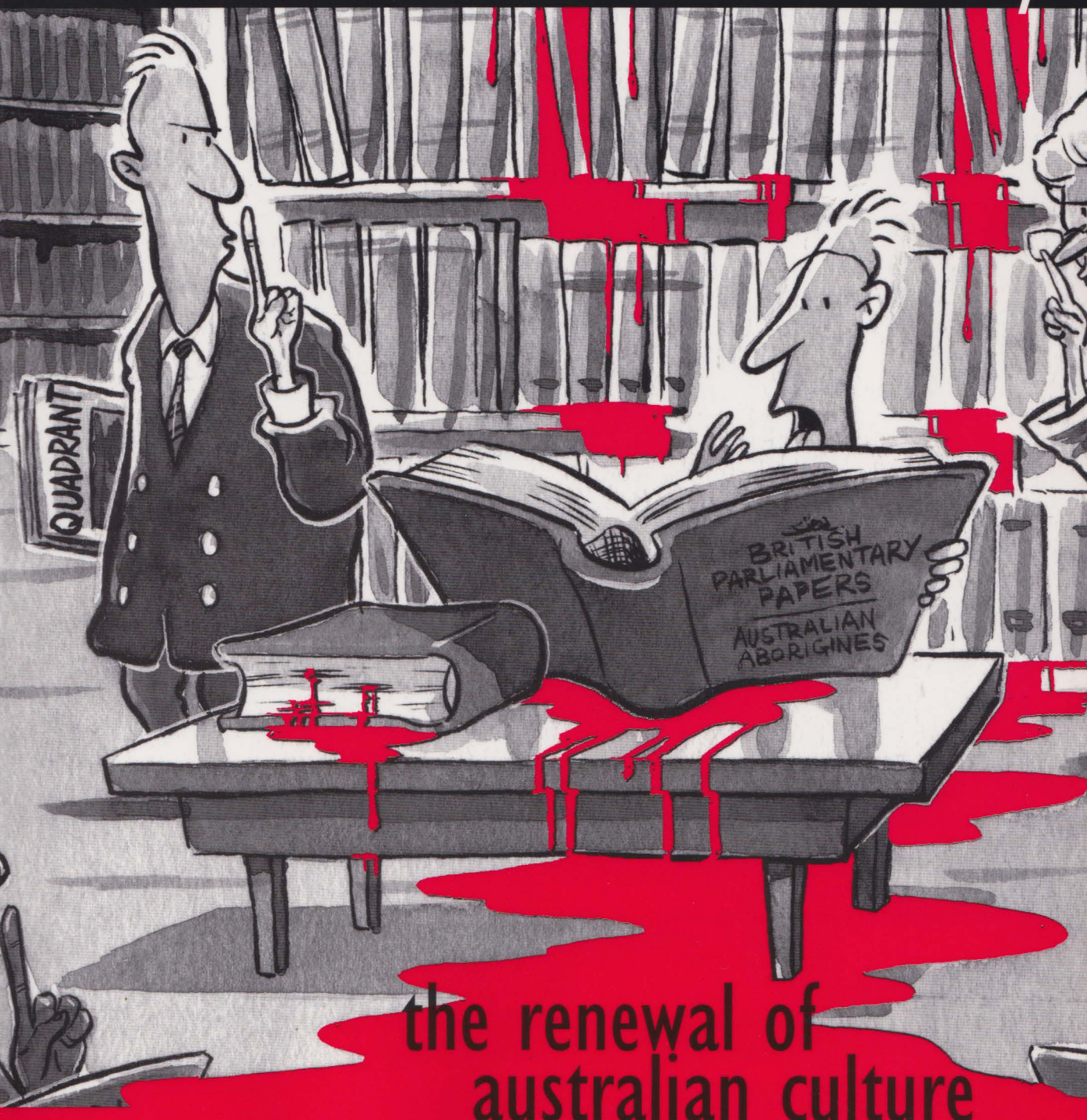
the massacre of australian history



the renewal of australian culture

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Ian Syson

The Massacre of

TOWARDS THE END of the production cycle of this issue, I received a call from a *Courier Mail* journalist in relation to Robert Manne's recent essay *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right*. She invited me (and re-invited me several times) to be critical of Manne. As regular *overland* readers are aware I have had reason to criticise Manne on a number of occasions – mainly in relation to his blindness to the virtues of the Australian Left and the positive reasons why many Australians became and remained communists, even at the height of Stalinist brutality in the Soviet Union. This blindness, in turn, affected his capacity to see things that the Left had known of and talked about for decades, particularly the widespread massacres of Aboriginal people and the forced removal of Aboriginal children.

I refused to reiterate my criticisms of Manne to this insistent journalist because they were not relevant to the reception of his essay. I said rather that I was impressed with the material he had published of late, especially on the Stolen Generations, but that this did not alter my previous criticisms or allay my suspicion that I would probably find reasons to be critical of him in the future. As we go to press, we are awaiting what will no doubt be the *Courier*'s sensitive and thoughtful dealings on this matter.

THE PUBLICATION of Manne's essay has sharpened the focus on an ongoing ideological battle in Australian cultural life. It has demonstrated again just how much is at stake when arguments take place about the treatment of Australia's Indigenous people. Australians need to understand the kind of actions that accompanied the White invasion and occupation of this land if we are ever to live on it with an appropriate sense of belonging. The next issue of *overland* will examine in depth the related issue of the treatment of people who come to Australia as asylum seekers.

Manne has also helped to draw attention to the cabal of right-wing thinkers and institutions who in the very process of denying their collectivity make it manifest. This grouping has organized particularly well in response to the gradual mainstream emergence of the terrible stories from the past. The white-blindfolded denial industry (a coalition of right-wing think-tanks, loony-right websites, well-placed public intellectuals, feeble-minded ex-lefties, facile satirists, gutless politi-

editorial

Australian History

cians and, of course, our old friends at *Quadrant*) has coalesced to peddle its fantasies about our history. Moreover, it has attacked Manne with a piquant viciousness reminiscent of the kind of vitriol reserved for Labor rats by the Party.

This issue of *overland*, *The Massacre of Australian History*, is a contribution to this ongoing debate. Some of our readers may think we are too focused here on *Quadrant*, a magazine deemed by them as irrelevant to serious debate. I disagree. *Quadrant*, after all, was set up by the CIA and the Right to conduct ideological warfare in Australia and remains one of its main organs. It is the institution where the intellectual Right finds repeated outlet for its more or less malignant outpourings. It is a magazine that seems to be taken seriously by the Prime Minister and other politicians who have important legislative and policy roles.

The Massacre of Australian History features two long and important articles. The first is Mark Davis's *overland* lecture which focuses on the way the Left needs to combat the logic of economic rationalism in its search for solutions to the continuing *cultural-political crisis it* finds itself in. He points to the many activities, interventions and manipulations of the Right and argues that these, paradoxically, offer hope to the Left:

> None of these things is about a natural process of inevitability. All of these things are about human agency. They are testament, in fact, to the power of human agency, and to the possibility that people can intervene in the operations of markets.

The second is a tremendous, though disturbing, essay on the massacres of Aboriginal people throughout Australian history. At twelve thousand words it is the longest piece ever published in *overland* – a fact which suggests the measure of its significance. Its authors, the historians Raymond Evans and Bill Thorpe, challenge a number of essays published recently in *Quadrant* about Australia's past, and put forward a counter-interpretation furthering a debate about the ways historians, journalists and others have dealt with the issue of Aboriginal and settler deaths.

Quadrant is highly critical of those, notably Henry Reynolds, who have interpreted Australian history as one of violent encounters between Indigenous peoples and invading settlers. Written by former academic, Keith Windschuttle, the essays query estimates of violent Aboriginal deaths; claim that evidence about a number of massacres – indeed the existence of some massacres – is false; deny that these processes constituted genocide; and conclude by stating that diseases were the main cause of Aboriginal deaths.

While Windschuttle's argument is given a serious and detailed response, Evans and Thorpe also offer additional empirical proof of Aboriginal massacres and bring to light a range of primary evidence about colonial Queensland, which Windschuttle fails to discuss, thus supporting Reynolds' contention that much more information exists about massacres and frontier violence in Australia (and in Queensland particularly) than most Australians are aware of. In the final section, they reflect on the concepts of 'genocide' and 'holocaust'. The authors argue that another, more specific term, 'indigenocide' is more suitable for the Australian context and possibly for other situations where *Indigenous* peoples have been, or still are, the principal focus of settler-invader, colonial and state oppression.

While overland is proud to publish this devastating rebuttal to Windschuttle, we are in some ways disappointed that it ever had to come to this. As Melissa Lucashenko points out in her moving response to Robert Manne, for many Aboriginal people this debate is raking over coals that should have been left alone. And as Peter Read says in his recent book, *Belonging*:

> The rivers of blood and tears. That's what has been omitted by so many seeking to belong beside or through Aboriginals. We must understand what happened before we argue through our responsibility. And yet I have to ask myself what my knowledge of Aboriginal history actually has brought to my own sense of belonging. So many massacres, so many homes destroyed, so many children stolen, so many daily insults to the Indigenous people that I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the sadness of our history.

Read's is a moral and emotional burden that few non-Indigenous Australians have borne. But the answer is not to hide these stories away; it is to make them known to all Australians. The revelation and acknowledgement of the brutalities past, present and still to come must be a central aspect of the reconciliation process.

Mark Davis

Second *overland* Lecture

Towards Cultural Renewal

IN 1977 PENGUIN BOOKS REPRINTED the fourth edition of Donald Horne's *The Lucky Country* with a front-cover tag-line that proclaimed the book "the classic study of Australia in the sixties".[1] Twenty-one years later, in 1998, the fifth edition of the book, also published by Penguin, carried the front-cover tag-line, "the classic book that explains Australia today".[2] A number of possible explanations present themselves. Perhaps history *is* circular, and in the late 1990s, after a three-decade break, Australia returned to a wishful Menzies era that valorized again the parochial complacency criticised in the first 1964 edition of *The Lucky Country*. Perhaps Penguin's editors belatedly discovered Horne's analysis to be so prescient that it applies to postwar Australian history in general, not just the 1960s, but the 1970s, eighties and nineties. And as Horne has himself suggested, in "the 1990s we again moved into a period of anxieties and discontents", which gives the book a particular kind of relevance now.[3]

The Lucky Country was scathing about 1960s Australian life. "The present elites in Australia", Horne wrote,

> are mostly second-rate. Many of the nation's affairs are conducted by racketeers of the mediocre who have risen to authority in a non-competitive community where they are protected in their adaptations of other people's ideas. At times they almost seem to form a secret society to preserve the obsolescent or the amateurish.[4] . . . Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck. It lives on other people's ideas, and, although its ordinary people are adaptable, most of its leaders (in all fields) so lack curiosity about the events that surround them that they are often taken by surprise.[5]

Clearly this is a book that was ahead of its time. The nation's affairs continue to be run by people who show little originality in their adaptations of other people's ideas, whether it be their slavish devotion to neoclassical economics (or 'economic rationalism') or to US-inspired divide-and-rule race-based politics, as seen in the racialized punishment being meted out to asylum seekers and the mostly Aboriginal victims of mandatory sentencing. According to *The Lucky Country* Australian literary and arts criticism also needs a shake-up. Faced by sudden change, a new diversity, and the demise of old certainties, critics "often give a bleak picture", having been "confused and sometimes made angry by the sudden variety".[6] Thirty-five years later Australia remains full of such critics, banded together in defensive little knots amid the aftershocks of postcolonialism, multiculturalism, feminism, and the culture wars and theory wars of the 1980s and 1990s. It's difficult not to be reminded of them when reading Horne's words that "Criticism of literature and the arts is poor, and some of it extremely cliquish."[7]

The Lucky Country is a distinctive book published at an important historical moment. It captured a mood for change that built in Australia during the final years of the Menzies

government. It advocated closer ties to Asia thirty years before most politicians, looked to America when Australia still looked to England, and lamented the White Australia policy and inferior opportunities and sometimes rights available to Aborigines and women nearly a decade before governments got seriously interested.[8] Other books published between 1960 and the early 1970s demonstrate this same urgent sense that a shift was needed in social and administrative priorities. Robin Boyd's *The Australian Ugliness* (1960), the Peter Coleman edited collection, *Australian Civilisation* (1962) and his *Obscenity, Blasphemy, Sedition: Censorship in Australia* (1962), Geoffrey Blainey's *The Tyranny of Distance* (1966), Hugh Stretton's *Ideas for Australian Cities* (1970), Humphrey McQueen's *A New Britannia* (1970), Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1971) and Kevin Gilbert's *Living Black* (1973), all put new ideas into public circulation and new phrases into the vernacular from a wide range of political standpoints, calling for a reappraisal of attitudes and institutions on the basis that change wasn't merely desirable but a necessity.

There is currently widespread disquiet in many sectors of Australian society. The gap between rich and poor grows. Indigenous Australians for the most part remain without proper land rights and there is no formal reconciliation or treaty between Indigenous and white Australia. Young people find it difficult to find work, or a toehold in the cultural mainstream. Politicians reach for ever more regressive measures, such as mandatory sentencing and the scapegoating of minorities, in an attempt to woo voters and paper over the cracks of growing social inequality. Mainstream political commentary is weak. Having spruiked the 'new economy' as a quantum paradigm shift, commentators failed to predict its demise, just as they failed to predict the demise of the Kennett and Court governments, or the re-emergence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party. While the new right dominates public discussion by scoring semantic points over whether the Stolen Generations were stolen or rescued, mainstream political pundits report national affairs as if politicians are soap opera characters, fixating on such things as possible leadership challenges, and there is little analysis of the real forces driving policy or contemporary cultural change.[9] The old, patronizing languages of coterie liberalism that have vied for moral centrality in Australian public life since the Second World War have demonstrably failed, washed up on the rocks of economic rationalism, 'wedge' politics and the Wik Ten-Point plan.[10] Confused by sudden diversity, having crash-landed in a postcolonial world, mainstream cultural life remains almost entirely, aggressively, white, and is deadened by complacency and stalemated agendas that often date back decades. As testimony to how backward-looking and timid Australia's ideas culture has become, the two best-selling social issues-oriented non-fiction books of the past decade have claimed, respectively, that feminism and multiculturalism are conspiracies.[11]

Australia remains full of critics banded together in defensive little knots amidst the aftershocks of postcolonialism, multiculturalism, feminism, and the culture wars and theory wars of the 1980s and 1990s.

Just as there was a strong need for reform in the Australia of the early 1960s, so there is a strong need now for new ideas to be put in public circulation, new expressions to enter the vernacular of debate, and for the renewal of government and public institutions.

The need for reform is arguably more pressing now than it was in the early 1960s, during the fading years of the Menzies government. The present urgency arises not simply because of the parochialism and lassitude engendered by a government willing to 'live on its luck', but because of a bipartisan failure. There is growing disquiet about the blanket adoption of neoclassical economic policy and free-market globalization, and their social consequences. As the public sector has shrunk and been sold off to the private sphere, many people are increasingly anxious about their prospects. This is an era that is socially poor and economically rich, where the gap between the two is the gap between record corporate profits and record flows of capital, and declining public amenity and shrivelled public discourse. Having waited two decades for the promised prosperity of the deregulated, free-market economy to flow through to their lives, many people are dismayed to discover themselves working longer hours, with less job security, higher health, education and child-care costs, reduced access to services, and few electoral alternatives, in an economy that takes as its touchstone the needs of business, not the needs of citizens.

A growing number of people are dismayed to see the increasing power that business, and unelected international bodies that represent business, enjoy on the world stage. In the Third World, corporations have gone "bottom fishing", as economics commentator Noreena Hertz describes it, playing developing countries off against each other to induce them to offer the most lucrative conditions for investment by reducing regulation, outlawing unions and turning a blind eye to environmental degradation.[12] Their governments have little choice but to take what they can get. In Africa the World Trade Organisation has protected the intellectual property of pharmaceutical companies by preventing the sale of cheap, generic AIDS drugs. In Argentina International Monetary Fund-imposed austerity measures resulted in a wave of suicides by retired people when pensions were cut to below poverty level.[13] In Europe the WTO has protected the interests of giant food companies such as Monsanto by ruling that the European Union can't ban synthetic hormones in beef, despite strong evidence they cause cancer, reduce male fertility, and result in the premature onset of puberty in children.[14] As Hertz has said, "Globalisation may deliver liberty, but not fraternity or equality."[15]

To contemplate the task of renewal it is first necessary to recall the legacy of the past three decades in Australian politics.

THE PRESENT MALAISE has its genesis in a fundamental shift that began to take place in Australian public life in the mid-1970s. For thirty years after the Second World War, Australia's major political parties, like those in many Western countries, adopted an unwritten policy of bipartisan consensus across a range of issues. Both shared a broad commitment to ideals such as the maintenance of protectionism, the underwriting of state-owned public broadcasting, the provision of universal education and health services, and a 'welfare state', expedited via the principles of Keynesian economics. There was tacit agreement not to campaign on issues that might prove corrosively divisive, such as race, and support for inclusive notions of democracy and human rights on the basis that the state had a duty of care to its citizens. A growing class of intellectuals – academics, editors, broadcasters, legal professionals, writers, public servants – became the stewards of that culture, maintaining its internal mechanisms, and as public intellectuals who brokered ideas in the public domain. Horne, obviously, was one of that class.

The first discordant note from the jug-band of ex-shopkeepers, B-actors and political bovver boys who eventually gathered together to herald the end of post-war consensus, can be heard in the speeches of a now almost forgotten English Conservative politician, Enoch Powell, who dramatically raised his profile in the late-1960s with a series of addresses explicitly designed to divide the community. His topic was race. Britain, he warned, was about to be flooded by a rising tide of African and Asian immigrants. Disenfranchised white working-class voters who felt alienated by the left-leaning consensus elites flocked to Powell, and other Conservative politicians took note.[16] A decade later, in 1978, Margaret Thatcher, then leader of the opposition, became the first Western leader of a major political party to openly challenge postwar consensus ideals when she gave a speech that echoed Powell's with its warnings that because of Asian immigration Britain might be "swamped by people with a different culture".[17] A decade later *her* speech would be echoed by another aspiring anti-consensus leader when John Howard gave similar warnings, in a display of that originality that Australian politicians are famous for. And that echo would repeat *again*, when Pauline Hanson warned of a flood of Asian immigrants in her maiden speech to parliament another decade later.

In Thatcher's Britain decolonization and mass immigration, rampant inflation ('stagflation') and rapidly growing unemployment, the oil shocks of the early 1970s and the rise of Asian economies had created an atmosphere of postcolonial self-doubt and economic uncertainty. Like all new right politicians since, Thatcher campaigned on both fronts. On the one hand she mobilized a powerful nationalist discourse that included a coded anti-immigrant rhetoric designed to divide working-class Labour voters against an educated, notionally left-leaning Labour elite. On the other hand she set out to dismantle the apparatus of the postwar welfare state. Privatization, deregulation, and cuts to health, education and welfare, were part of a turn away from Keynesianism towards a new free-market philosophy that argued against state intervention and for the provision of services by the private sector.

No political shift is ever total. This one took place, and continues, as a gradual "war of position" (to use activist and intellectual Stuart Hall's description) that has encountered pockets of support and resistance all along the way.[18] Yet so much ground has now been lost that any argument for cultural renewal must

necessarily have at its centre a consideration of contemporary economic theories and the new political consensus that has coalesced around them.

Just as the old postwar consensus had its guiding establishment, the new free-market bipartisan consensus is guided by an elite of editors, advisers, broadcasters, columnists, lobbyists, economists, researchers and funders. One difference is that while the postwar consensus elite were generally either publicly funded or held other publicly accountable positions (in the media, for example), the new elite tend to inhabit the less publicly accountable environs of private research institutes, and prefer the subtle advantages of private funding. In America and Europe since the late-1970s governments such as the Thatcher, Reagan and current Bush administrations have relied heavily on the support of new-right think-tanks and the backing of pro-free-market media, including the Murdoch press and prestigious publications such as the *Economist*. As the economist Paul Krugman has written, "The role of a few key funders, like the Coors and Olin Foundations, in building an intellectual façade for late twentieth-century conservatism is a story that someone needs to write."[19] In Australia free-market policy emanated from Treasury, was backed by new-right think-tanks such as the Institute of Public Affairs, the Centre for Independent Studies and the Australian Institute of Public Policy, was facilitated by a range of consultants and ex-Treasury officials, and was supported in the press by economist leader-writers and influential free-market editors such as Paul Kelly in his time as editor of the *Australian* and Max Walsh and P.P. McGuinness in their time at helm of the *Financial Review*.[20]

Down in the engine room of the new free-market consensus, the new right has worked tirelessly to change attitudes and manufacture new social meanings. As Stuart Hall explained of Thatcherism,

> No social or political force can hope to create a new type of society or raise the masses to a new level of civilization without first becoming the leading cultural force and in that way providing the organizing nucleus of a wide-ranging set of new conceptions.[21]

The mining magnate Hugh Morgan has put it less subtly: the big business funding of think-tanks was motivated by a desire to "reshape the political agenda" and "change public opinion",[22] because politicians "only accept what is in public opinion polls, so we have to change public opinion".[23]

The new right has an uncanny knack for taking third-rate failed academics and turning them into a major cultural force. It's a slick operation. In every country where conservative governments have sponsored free-market policies, they have also sponsored a range of divisive policies centred on the politics of race, gender, class and sexuality, oriented around normative ideas of national identity and the family. Alongside these run secondary campaigns on public broadcasting and education. In every case new right think-tank-funded researchers (in Australia Barry Maley on family policy at the CIS; Andrew Norton, education, CIS; Lucy Sullivan, family and welfare, CIS; Ron Brunton, Aboriginal issues, IPA; Michael Warby, public broadcasting, ex-IPA, to name a few), have provided the ballast for the campaign, publishing work across a series of non-peer-reviewed pseudo-academic journals and websites that is then repeated as op-ed pieces in daily newspapers, or regurgitated as fact by like-minded newspaper columnists or radio talkback hosts. Piers Ackerman, Bettina Arndt, Michael Barnard, Andrew Bolt, Ron Casey, Frank Devine, Miranda Devine, Michael Duffy, Alan Jones, P.P. McGuinness, Christopher Pearson, Stan Zemanek: you know their work. Recent debates on Aboriginal land rights and reconciliation, the supposed bias of the ABC, higher education funding, the rights of asylum-seekers, and the welfare rights of single parents have all to a greater or lesser extent been pushed along by the new right. Recent publications by Robert Manne and Andrew Markus, for instance, have detailed the key role played by the new right in controversies about Mabo, Wik and the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children.[24]

In the broader context, the new right – and the rest of that wheezing jug-band of journalists and politicians who have provided so much of the sound-track for the recent past – have sought to change popular attitudes to the nature of work, the nature of social equity, the usefulness of welfare, the priorities of democracy, and even the nature of and desirability of

Having spruiked the 'new economy' as a quantum paradigm shift, commentators failed to predict its demise, just as they failed to predict the demise of the Kennett and Court governments, or the re-emergence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party.

politics itself. Workers have been encouraged to see themselves as sole contractors; social equity has been refigured as having to do with a level playing field where no-one is disadvantaged at the outset and where no-one therefore requires special treatment; welfare has been recast as something that does more harm than good; democracy has been remodelled to a populist, majoritarian model; and those who challenge this have been disparaged as 'politically correct' or hounded as self-interested ('new class') acolytes of parasitical groups such as a 'welfare industry', a 'multicultural industry' or an 'Aboriginal industry'.

Along the way the new right and their allies have also corrupted and compromised major democratic institutions. They have attacked judicial independence, politicized the public service, allowed business interests to set important political agendas, sought to undermine international conventions and protocols on human rights and the environment, and undermined the human rights of individuals and sectional groups, as well as having skewed media priorities away from the general interest and towards their own, sectional purposes.

Where has the money come from? To follow the new-right audit trail is to note the preponderance of mining company support. The Institute for Public Affairs, which provided anthropological research on the validity of Aboriginal land claims to the Liberal Party during their anti-Mabo and Wik campaigns, has historically been heavily dependant on mining company funding. The board of the Victorian IPA has included James Balderstone, who also served on the BHP board; Hugh Morgan, managing director of the Western Mining Company; and Dame Leonie Kramer, another Western Mining board member.[25] It presently includes a representative each from Rio Tinto, Western Mining, BHP, and Shell. Similarly, the Centre for Independent Studies was reportedly seeded by a $40,000 grant organized by Morgan, with ongoing funding provided by Western Mining, CRA, BHP, Shell, and Santos.[26] The Tasman Institute, which has been credited with providing the ideological blueprint for the Kennett Government in Victoria, was sponsored by BHP, CRA, Esso, MIM, Shell, Woodside Petroleum and Western Mining.[27]

The new right, in short, have sought to remake society in their own image, and have spent up big to do it. Yet despite all their efforts, the new right's achievements don't include economic success. Not, at least, in the terms originally advertised.

The amount of ink spilt to support contemporary free-market economic theory is so excessive as to look suspicious. This is an era of incredible prosperity, write the world's editorialists, financial columnists, press secretaries and global soothsayers. It's difficult to deny. There has never been more money in more rapid circulation. But an era of prosperity for whom? One assumption of postwar consensus was that the accumulated wealth of society could be managed downwards. Corporate profits were routinely assumed to be of indirect benefit to all. They created jobs and government revenue via taxes. In the new labour efficient, tax minimized free market, wealth circulates in an increasingly self-contained world. Politicians, editorial writers and economic commentators might have embraced the new economic consensus, but when it comes to corporate profits and increased global wealth they prefer to talk as if we're still in the old world, and the new wealth is available to all.

Despite the attractive images in the global soothsayers' crystal balls, the free market has failed to redistribute wealth. Capital has tended to gather where capital already is, and there are now whole geographical areas and social sectors that are largely bypassed by capital flows. This is because the free market is primarily concerned with wealth creation rather than wealth distribution. During the 1980s era of 'trickledown' Reaganomics, family income declined in every sector of US society except the top 10 per cent, where it increased 19.5 per cent.[28] According to another study, two-thirds of the increase in US wealth during the 1980s went to the richest 1 per cent of families.[29] In Australia between 1976 and 1992 "the proportion of Australian households with an income of more than $72,000 (based on constant 1991/92 values) rose from 15 to 30 per cent [while] at the same time, the proportion of households with an income of less than $22,000 rose from 20 per cent to 30 per cent".[30] According to recent Bureau of Statistics figures, Australia is now one of the most economically unequal countries in the Western world.[31] The global picture shows few signs of the promised new dawn: between 1960 and 1990 the percentage of global income going to the poorest 20 per cent of the global population was halved.[32]

The theory has also failed to deliver even in its own terms. It has failed to achieve 'market equilibrium', provide stability, or end boom-bust cycles.[33] Despite decades of sometimes draconian 'reform', it has failed to correct labour market failure – not all who are willing to work can find a job.[34] Even the

most vaunted success of neoclassical economics, inflation control, is arguably largely a result of the deep recessions of the early 1980s and early 1990s.[35]

Structural problems are starting to emerge because, unlike governments, markets can't plan ahead and corporations are tending not to. One outcome of the privatization of utilities has been the running down of infrastructure to the point where it is estimated Australia will have chronic energy shortages within five years.[36] Short-term ideological imperatives are being allowed to win out over longer-term planning elsewhere too. Free-market ideology has resulted in education cuts and falling standards, yet, as the population ages and the relative size of the workforce shrinks, future productivity will need to increase if Australia is to remain 'competitive'.[37] Nor has the mantra that equates competition with efficiency been borne out by experience. The economist Steve Keen gives one example:

> Australia's 'competitive' roll-out of optical cable, in which two suppliers competed to provide physical cable links to households and firms, led to the richer and more densely populated parts of the country having two optical cables running past every house, while poorer and less densely populated parts of the country had none.[38]

Other so-called productivity and efficiency gains promoted by free-marketeers seem little more than simple sleights of hand. One method of reducing labour market failure is to offer workers an increased variety of wage/time options for work performed, as part of 'freeing up' the market to make it operate more efficiently. In practice this has amounted to no more than reducing welfare eligibility entitlements to push the unemployed into casual and part-time work. Just three hours work a fortnight is enough to shift people to where they don't count in the unemployment figures, while others have withdrawn from the labour market altogether. Increased productivity and efficiency are furphies when the costs to society that result from increased division and stratification remain uncalculated. Amid the gallons of ink spent daily on the topic of economic 'reform', there is little discussion of these costs.

But these points about the political and economic legacy of the past few decades are more than obvious. We knew the answer to the sums already. Most free-market economic 'reforms' have little basis in performance. Almost all are ideologically driven and conform to the definition of right-wing conservatism proposed by the social theorist Sara Diamond when she says that to "be right wing means to support the state in its capacity as an *enforcer* of order and to oppose the state as a distributor of wealth and power downward and more equitably in society".[39] A fundamental strategy of the new right since the 1970s has been to cede power away from labour and back to capital, and to dismantle apparatus that might distribute wealth downwards, even by stealth. Recent increases in job contracting and the use of casual labour, for example, effectively bypass equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation designed to provide employment parity for women.

The question is, what to do?

In Europe the WTO has protected the interests of giant food companies such as Monsanto by ruling that the European Union can't ban synthetic hormones in beef, despite strong evidence they cause cancer, reduce male fertility, and result in the premature onset of puberty in children.

HORNE'S TONE in *The Lucky Country* is confident. The Australia of *The Lucky Country* is a nascent project, ready for a civilizing pen. Today there's uncertainty about how to articulate a national project, or even if such a project is desirable. The most commonly canvassed types of reform aren't inspirational, they're instrumentalist. Political leaders aren't visionaries, but clerks who keep an eye on the national accounts. People don't look forward, they look back. They aren't idealistic, they're nostalgic. The present consensus extends so far into the apparatus of opinion- and policy-making that there seems little room for alternatives. Free-market economics and globalization have been sold as 'inevitable' and adopted with an air of resignation that makes talk of the future deadening.

To speak of renewal is to look forward when others seem to look back.

To hear people speak sometimes is to wonder if there's a great mystery about social change. There's no great mystery. Social change is what happens when people stop complaining and start organizing. The present push for reform in Australia is emerging in a suprisingly wide variety of places. It's emerging both as a popular movement for change and as

an intellectual movement among academics and other thinkers. It's emerging across the mainstream political spectrum, in the National and Liberal party backbench and in sections of the Labor party, as well as from the side, from the Greens and the Democrats. It's emerging in a range of groups as diverse as feminists, farmers, Aborigines, small business people (alienated by the ever-growing bias of government towards big business), anti-corporate-globalization protesters, ethnic community organizations, and environmentalists. What remains is for these disparate forces to come together around a compelling, popular reformist narrative, and for a new set of ideas to enter the vernacular and form the basis for a new, broad-based consensus.

There can be no easy return to the easy assumptions of postwar consensus culture, despite their sometimes popular and sometimes nostalgic appeal. The free-market revolution has run alongside another marked shift that has been no less revolutionary. Since the late 1940s immigration has been a major contributor to Australian population growth. Between 1947 and 1997 the proportion of the population born overseas increased from 10 per cent to 23 per cent. A further 27 per cent had at least one overseas born parent. Half the population, in other words, has some sort of postwar immigrant background. Over the same period the ethnic background of immigrants has changed markedly. In 1947 81 per cent of the immigrant intake came from the main English-speaking countries. By 1997 this had halved to 39 per cent.[40] In the early 1970s there was a marked increase of immigrants who were visibly 'other', who came mainly from South East Asia.

Both postwar consensus and free-market consensus culture are responses to the problem of managing diversity. Postwar consensus culture operated as a top-down monoculture that attempted to manage diversity through assimilation, creating 'slots' for different sectional groups in a centrally managed economy. There is a snapshot of the weaknesses of this culture – its assumptions about who fits where in the social hierarchy – in the current nostalgia among what remains of the postwar-style liberal cultural elite for the loss of the so-called public intellectual. Over the past decade or so many figures have emerged who might qualify for the title of public intellectual, but the fact that many are black tends to exclude them from the liberal elite view. They appear, still, on the horizons of middlebrow liberal debate, as victims in need of white charity.

Free-market consensus culture attempts to manage social diversity by reducing the range of social and cultural differences to a single principle of market exchange. Potentially fractious encounters with the 'other' become simply an opportunity for global trade, and those cultural differences that exist within a given market are flattened by the primacy of a shared economic imperative, figured as the country's need to become 'globally competitive'. Those who refuse to subjugate their cultural identity to market primacy find themselves cast as social aberrations and an unreasonable obstacle to the trading rights of others – the recent aggressive attacks on Aboriginal groups, for example, can be seen as a response to their refusal to fit into the free market system as simple agents of exchange, and their determination to claim rights and identities elsewhere.

As the sociologist Michael Pusey accurately predicted in 1993, "[s]ocial integration will be the central problem that will stand over politics in this decade just as surely as 'efficiency' had done in the last".[41] A new consensus, unlike the previous two, will need to allow for the diversity and autonomy of its various member groups. Such a consensus won't involve merely tinkering at the edges of the present system, through, say, the adoption of some kind of 'third way' – as Graham Sewell wrote in a recent *overland*, the Third Way is more like a Middle Way "where the brutalities of economic rationalism are moderated by the hand-wringing platitudes of bourgeois liberalism".[42] It will work at the level of ideas, and involve a sustained reckoning about the possible shape of a representative, postmodern democracy.

The first part of this reckoning will involve a sustained re-engagement with two central democratic institutions – government and the mainstream media. In the first instance this will require a sustained conversation about how a postmodern democracy might look. Is it possible to imagine a democratic model that can accommodate expressions of fundamental social and cultural difference (without fetishizing them), while articulating the shared objectives that different groups have in common? To achieve such a democracy will involve a thoroughgoing interrogation of the whiteness of Australian culture. Where, for example, are the Vietnamese newspaper columnists? Why do almost all the non-white television anchors appear on SBS? Why are Aboriginal intellectuals rarely asked about anything other than 'Aboriginal issues'?

Do national governments still have a use? Given

that global communications networks, global flows of capital and such diverse things as international human rights covenants and WTO trade rulings have eroded national borders, it's easy to suspect not. Some of the most crucial forms of politics have always been unofficial – labour organizing, street meetings, and so on – and since governments have increasingly abdicated responsibility on vital issues by failing to stand up to large corporations, grass roots activism has become even more important. In Europe consumers, not governments, for instance, have led the successful campaigns against GM foods through supermarket boycotts.

Yet, as Noreena Hertz points out, this type of activism has disadvantages. Shareholder activism and the direct lobbying of corporations ultimately puts its faith in the market, not in politics. Supermarket and shareholder activism favours the middle classes, who have money to invest and who can afford alternative, often more expensive, brands, and can lead to a tyranny of those who can protest most effectively. Allowing corporations to set the limits of social acceptability is dangerous because

> social investment and social justice will never become their core activity [and] their contribution to society's needs cannot be thought of as a reasonable proxy for state responsibility . . . Downgrading the role of the state in favour of corporate activism threatens to make societal improvements dependent on the creation of profit.[43]

In an era of globalization government remains remarkably centralized (as most lobbyists and activists know). Nations are still dominant international 'actors', and set the vast majority of the policy that affects people's everyday lives. Keeping the ideals of democratic process alive is crucial. The process of building a new consensus will mean getting serious about putting political ideas to government, having marshalled a growing body of dissent behind them.

The process of renewal will need strong advocates in the mainstream political parties, and in the mainstream media. In the first edition of *The Lucky Country* Horne wrote: "What has happened in Australian publishing is that while the newspapers stood still, the field for experiment moved into *new* publications."[44] The situation is similar now. In an increasingly two-tier society, official opinion and an identifiable, growing slab of public opinion have parted company. Today's newspapers no longer broker new ideas, nor do the mainstream electronic media – only people who work for them think that they do. Debate takes place elsewhere, in list-serv email groups, in journals such as *overland*, *Arena*, and *Meanjin* (all of which have to some degree reinvented themselves in response to the present crisis), on websites such as the Third-World Network and Indymedia, in academic forums in the humanities, at new small presses such as Common Ground, and in alternative newspapers such as the *Koori Mail* and the *Paper*. Meanwhile, the mainstream media talks corridor politics and leaked memos.

Confused by sudden diversity, having crash-landed in a postcolonial world, mainstream cultural life remains almost entirely, aggressively, white, and is deadened by complacency and stalemated agendas that often date back decades.

Yet the task of renewal will necessarily involve the mainstream media. None of the existing alternative forums is influential in mainstream political discussion. As yet there is no website capable of setting a national agenda. None reaches a sizeable proportion of the Australian public in the way that a newspaper or Alan Jones's radio talkback show reaches hundreds of thousands of people daily.

The alternative media are often class-bound. Over half Australia's households have no internet connection, and amidst the web-hype it's easy to forget that over half the world's population has never used a phone. Whereas alternative media attract sectional, often tertiary-educated groups and tend to lack geographical location, newspapers and the electronic media, like party politics, work mostly according to a logic of place and attract users across the spectrum of society. The alternative media are crucial, but the ideas developed there will have been of little use if they don't reach a wide, cross-sectional audience. There are lessons to be learnt here from the new right, on how to establish clearing houses that promote ideas into mainstream media looking for cheap, compelling, off-the-rack copy. Thousands of people have attended Save the ABC rallies, attracting relatively little media coverage. Fewer than forty people, including speakers, attended a recent IPA-promoted anti-ABC conference, but the event generated coverage in almost every major Australian newspaper, in-

cluding the reprinting of many of the speakers' papers as opinion pieces. This might be a triumph of conservative politics in an era of conservative media, but it's also a triumph of organization.

The second part of this reckoning is even less glamorous. One reason the present movement against free-market philosophies has failed to make much headway is that its various strands have failed to unite around a credible alternative economic model. This isn't to suggest that the operations of markets should determine the basis for social life, but is merely to acknowledge the practicality that no change will take place without the promotion of a popular, workable alternative model for economic globalization. Without such a model the present push for reform will stagnate as mere dissent. A new economic model would need to promise prosperity and equity across the range of social difference and groups of different meaning, and at the same time allow sectional groups autonomy and the power to participate on their own terms, reinstating human agency at the centre of the economic picture without at the same time reinstating traditional hierarchies.

If the operations of the free market are inevitable, why do they need so many foot-soldiers? Why do they need the armies of compliant journalists; the prosletysing politicians; the legions of think-tanks; the sending of think-tank advisers to small countries to manage their economies and impose regimes of privatization on them . . .

This new economics would provide a practical basis for business and acknowledge that some ideas derived from free-market economics have proved both useful and genuinely popular, though it would necessarily repudiate the refusal of neoclassical economics to adapt to finite resources.[45] Such a model would need to critique 'magic box' theories of globalization, defining the things that make the present model so objectionable – its basis in corporatism and anti-democratic new-right philosophy, its clumsy attempts to manage diversity and clandestine Western suprematism, and the power it grants unelected bodies to impose draconian, heavily ideological solutions – while offering a viable alternative model underpinned by more clearly democratic management priorities. The conversation surrounding such a model would need to argue the difference between iniquitous models of globalization, and the usefulness of such things as global communications networks and properly negotiated global conventions on such things as human rights and the environment.

The danger is that both postwar forms of Australian consensus have pandered to populist movements with a strong racist component – the first dating back to Deakinite protectionism and the White Australia policy with its fears of an Asian invasion, the second in response to a change in immigration mix in the mid-1970s, with *its* fears of an Asian invasion – and that without credible economic alternatives the present mood for change will transmogrify, as it already has in places, into proposals for an even more exclusionary and punitive social contract based in a fear of diversity.

To campaign for widespread reform is to acknowledge that the most vital culture of democracy that has been under attack is the culture of political agency itself. Totemic free-market consensus texts such as Frances Fukayama's *The End of History and the Last Man* have promoted the idea that politics is simply *over*. Just as political parties are no longer bastions of idealism, but tout themselves merely as the better 'managers', so expressions of political will – such as recent anti-globalization protests – have been reported as aberrations and throwbacks to an earlier, now obsolete, age of protest. Yet the behaviour of the free-marketeers themselves suggests otherwise. The first thing we know about the present model for globalization as a result of the incessant repetition of what really amounts to nothing more than a rumour, is that it is inevitable. Inevitable for whom? The logic of inevitability is itself of a piece with the underlying neo-Darwinist free-market philosophies that cede all power to the survival of the fittest in the marketplace, understating the possibility of human agency.

Yet to hear such talk is to wonder, who writes the cheques? And why is such talk even necessary? If the operations of the free market are inevitable, why do they need so many foot-soldiers? Why do they need

the armies of compliant journalists; the prosletysing politicians; the legions of think-tanks; the sending of think-tank advisers to small countries to manage their economies and impose regimes of privatization on them; the long phone conversations between Rupert Murdoch and his editors; the ever-increasing round of annual conferences; the endless lobbying and funding of free-market think-tanks and research institutes by corporations such as General Electric, Hewlett-Packard, Texas Instruments, Citicorp, Chase Manhattan, Shell Oil and Western Mining; the creation of endless pseudo-academic journals pushing dodgy research outside the networks of peer-reviewed academic journals; the creation of numerous research fellowships in corporate-funded research institutes; the opinion-massaging editorials; the creation of international sanctioning bodies; the making of large corporate donations to those bodies; and the rendering of the aims of those bodies into coercive international laws?

None of these things is about a natural process of inevitability. All of these things are about human agency. They are testament, in fact, to the power of human agency, and to the possibility that people can intervene in the operations of markets.

This has been a long political cycle, economically rich yet socially poor, centred on a politics of divisiveness and naturalized inequality, in a tyranny of the economically productive over those deemed unproductive. We are yet to reach the end of that cycle, but we won't reach it by failing to act, or by letting ourselves be convinced that the future is not in our hands. Reinventing political agency is everything in the present struggle. It is both a basis for everything that needs to be done, and a reminder that there are ways out of that increasingly dark tunnel Australians entered in the mid-1970s.

ENDNOTES

1. Donald Home, *The Lucky Country* (4th ed.), Penguin, 1977.
2. Donald Home, *The Lucky Country* (5th ed.), Penguin, 1998.
3. Home, 1998, p.xiii.
4. Donald Home, *The Lucky Country* (2nd ed.), Penguin, 1966, p.50.
5. Home, 1966, p.239.
6. Home, 1977, pp.73–4.
7. Home, 1977, p.78.
8. Despite its prescience, *The Lucky Country* nevertheless underestimates the prior capacity of Australian society to criticise and reinvent itself. According to *The Lucky Country* (in a remark that appears across the span of editions), there has been a "determined lack of serious consideration of human destiny" in Australia, and a lack of "prolonged consideration of the Australian condition" (1966, p.233; 1988, p.225). As such the book sells short a long, almost continuous tradition of Australian social reflection and reform, of which it is itself part. Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* (1903) is arguably near the beginning of such a tradition. Sir Keith Hancock's *Australia* (1930), Arthur Phillips' 'The Cultural Cringe' (1950), and Vance Palmer's *The Legend of the Nineties* (1954), all point to a strong consideration of 'human destiny' and 'the Australian condition' that was taking place in the period before the publication of *The Lucky Country*. As Nettie Palmer asked in her 1942 essay, 'Australia – an International Unit', "what is the human value of this last continent?" (in Jenny Lee, Philip Mead and Gerald Murnane (eds), *The Temperament of Generations: Fifty Years of Writing in Meanjin*, MUP, 1990, p.14.) With one eye on Australia's easy-going failure to consider its destiny and one eye on the Cold War, *The Lucky Country* instead promotes a modern American-style cosmopolitanism, idealizing a Kennedy cabinet where half the members read the anti-Communist liberal journal, *Encounter*. (1966, p.237) Having neglected a tradition of (often left-leaning) past reformers, the book anticipates the formation of a new community of modern intellectuals of the sort that assembled in the 1960s in the US and Europe, promoted by the anti-Communist, CIA-sponsored, Congress for Cultural Freedom, which funded both *Encounter* and *Quadrant*, which Home co-edited between 1963 and 1966. Horne was also a member of the executive of the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom between 1962 and 1966.
9. As Aboriginal rights activist Noel Pearson said of Australian political commentary in the late 1990s, the "politicians have been playing real, hard politics and the analysts have given us gammon analysis" ('Dreadful Experiment That Went Wrong', *Australian*, 19 June 1998, p.13). For examples of new right agenda-setting in the Stolen Generations debate, *see* Robert Manne, 'In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right', *The Australian Quarterly Essay*, Issue 1, 2001, pp.1–113.
10. For further analysis of Australian coterie liberalism and its discontents, *see* Mark Davis, *Gangland: Cultural Elites and the New Generationalism* (2nd. ed.), Allen & Unwin, 1999.
11. Helen Garner, *The First Stone*, Picador, Sydney, 1995; Paul Sheehan, *Among the Barbarians*, Random House, Milson's Point, 1998.
12. Noreena Hertz, 'Why We Must Stay Silent No Longer', *Guardian Unlimited, Observer*, www.observer.co.uk/comment/story/0,6903,470283,00.html, accessed 26 April 2001.
13. www.ifg.org/un.html, accessed 27 March 2001.
14. Hertz.
15. Hertz.
16. Private Conservative party polling had showed that 48 per cent of the electorate had heard Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech and 67 per cent thought it "made sense",

in Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968–1990*, CUP, 1994, p.167.
17. Smith, p.179.
18. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, Verso, 1988, p.3.
19. Paul Krugman, 'Supply-Side Virus Strikes Again', *Slate*, 15 August 1996, slate.msn.com/Dismal/96-08-15/Dismal.asp
20. Much of this story is told in Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes its Mind*, CUP, Cambridge, 1991.
21. Hall, p.9.
22. Alex Carey, 'Conspiracy or Groundswell', in Ken Coghill (ed.), *The New Right's Australian Fantasy*, McPhee-Gribble, 1987, p.14.
23. Bernie Taft, 'The New Right in Practice', in Coghill, p.29.
24. Manne, 2001; Andrew Markus, *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia*, Allen & Unwin, 2001.
25. Paul Kelly, *End of Certainty* (2nd ed.), Allen & Unwin, 1994, p.48.
26. Kelly, p.47.
27. Alan Kohler, 'The Radical Right Wing Speeds the Kennett Revolution', *The Age*, 14 February 1997.
28. Michael Pusey, 'Reclaiming the Middle Ground . . . From New Right "Economic Rationalism"', in Stephen King and Peter Lloyd (eds), *Economic Rationalism: Dead End or Way Forward?*, Allen & Unwin, 1993, p.19.
29. Robert Heilbronner, 'The Deficit: A Way Out', *New York Review*, 19 November 1992, in Pusey, 1993, pp.19–20.
30. IBIS Business Information, in Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia*, 1993, p.137, in Pusey, 1993, p.20.
31. ABS, *2001 Year Book Australia*, cited in Tim Colebatch, 'Income Divide Widening, World Study Finds', *The Age*, 27 January 2001, p.3.
32. Caroline Thomas, 'Poverty, Development and Hunger', in John Baylis and Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, p.456.
33. As Greg Barrett explains, "In order to increase employment and economic growth, governments increase their spending and lower interest rates. Before 1970 these changes were moderate. In contrast, from 1970 interest rates rose to very high levels and the government budget swung sharply between deficit and surplus. This active monetary and fiscal policy response to the deteriorating economic outcomes could not bring unemployment or national income growth to their pre-1970 levels." Greg Barrett, 'John Howard: Yesterday's Economic Manager', in Gwynneth Singleton (ed.), *The Howard Government: Australian Commonwealth Administration 1996–1998*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, p.134.
34. Barrett, p.132.
35. Barrett, p.136.
36. ABC television news item, 7 May 2001.
37. Barrett, p.133.
38. Steve Keen, *Debunking Economics: The Naked Emperor of the Social Sciences*, Pluto Press, Annandale, 2001, p.107.
39. Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*, Guilford, 1995, p.9. Italics in original.
40. Markus, p.11.
41. Pusey, 1993, p.25.
42. Graham Sewell, 'A Reply to Responses, Substantial and Apparent', *overland*, No. 162, Autumn 2001, p.50.
43. Hertz.
44. Horne, 1966, p.231, original italics.
45. As Michael Pusey has commented, for all its Darwinism, neoclassical economics is characterized by "an almost absolute refusal to adapt demands to the increasingly finite resources of the (physical) environment". Pusey, 1991, p.21.

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He would like to thank Foong Ling Kong, Jenny lee, Ian Syson and Marcus Westbury for the conversations that occasioned the writing of this essay, which was originally delivered as the second overland *lecture on 4 July 2001. It is dedicated to the memory of Kevin Edward Davis, 15 June 1937 – 4 July 1985.*

Three responses to Robert Manne's *In Denial*

More Migaloo Words?

Melissa Lucashenko

I PICK UP *In Denial: The Stolen Generations and the Right* gingerly. More Migaloo words, and these from a powerful conservative. Slightly nauseous with nervous tension (will the attacking words leap off the page? Will he too pull on a mask, and begin to kick the corpse?) I begin to examine Manne's arguments. It isn't long before I relax; Manne can see the connections, he knows the score. He's still Migaloo of course – and in several instances wrong – but the sickening rank hypocrisy of the Bruntons, the McGuinnesses and the Duffys is absent here.

Manne's essay is based on this premise: the Australian Right has found it expedient to attack the Stolen Generations Inquiry because it fears the sympathy towards blacks which the Inquiry generated. Attacking the Inquiry, the Commissioners, the witnesses and their supporters, is part of a larger 'culture war' over the meaning of Aboriginal dispossession in its entirety. Manne will have none of it. He doesn't mince his words: "The abuse by the pompous and the priviliged of the powerless and the dispossessed is not a pretty sight."

He disposes in pretty quick order with most of the Inquiry's flaws – it probably overestimated the numbers of children stolen, it was imprecise about the difference between racial and cultural genocide – and then he moves onto the arguments of his former *Quadrant* mates. There are 105 pages to *In Denial*. Most of them consist of Manne slicing a cool academic scalpel through the self-serving drivel of right-wingers who wouldn't know an Aborigine if they drove over one on the way to the Melbourne Club.

Some have tried to argue that it was churches, not governments who took children away. Manne shows otherwise. Some, particularly Ron Brunton of the right-wing Institute of Public Affairs and the similarly redneck Frank Devine, take issue with the Inquiry's use of the term 'genocide' to describe the assimilation process. (Devine has derisively described genocide as a 'clever-dick' term, by which I assume he means he can't fault its use in any more serious sense.) Manne responds, quoting A.O. Neville from a 1937 conference of Aboriginal Administrators:

> Are we going to have a population of one million blacks in the Commonwealth or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?

It seems straightforward to me. The idea was to get rid of Aborigines. At this point, Manne states unequivocally, "genocidal thought and administrative practise touched".

Manne gleefully takes apart the specious arguments of the Right. He points out, for instance, that the Inquiry was attacked for relying on the oral 'anecdotal' evidence of 535 Aboriginal witnesses, then draws our attention to the fact that the very same commentators have based many of their own arguments on the semi-fictional autobiography of one – that's right, one – white patrol officer, who spent three years in the Northern Territory as a young man some forty years ago. This patrol officer later admitted that his memoir, seized upon by the Howard government with glee, was merely "a cameo shot . . . the 'recollections' of a 'young boy'".

Manne goes on to remind us of the attack launched in Parliament by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (scary isn't it?) upon the term 'stolen generation'. Not every Aboriginal child was removed, so let's stop using that horrible, emotive word, shall we, the Minister squeaked as he simultaneously did violence to the English language and re-victimized the stolen individuals.

Manne emerges from the pages of *In Denial* as a skilled

academic and a decent man, able to see through the hideous veneer of race-baiting to the real issues of Aboriginal child removal. It can be assumed that Manne, a Jew from Melbourne, has an intimate acqaintance with race-hatred in the twentieth century. In losing the editorship of *Quadrant*, kicked in the teeth by his former mates, Manne has had a taste of what white privilege means in Australia, and what happens to those who speak against it. It is to his credit that he nevertheless continues to take on the conservative intellegentsia and the Howard Government on these issues.

Right-wing responses to *In Denial* have been uniformly predictable and mendacious. Like Raymond Gaita, I feel a little sick upon reading them. The most recent liberal response I've read was Inga Clendinnen in the *Australian Review of Books*, claiming to be on Manne's side as she proposed doing away with that nasty UN definition of genocide that doesn't let Australia off the hook. "I believe that to take the murder out of genocide is to render it vacuous" she argues in a long and unconvincing piece, suggesting that Australian genocide is – or should somehow be made – exempt from the international rules. Why? It is "politically foolish" to insist on remembering what really happened. Yo Momma, that's us, all right, we's just fools fo' genocide . . .

As a blackfella standing a White Australia, I regard *In Denial* as a brave and useful account, even though I would certainly take issue with Manne that the massacres and the overall history were "inevitable". But jump the fence for a moment, and look at all this from the black world. The only viable position from an Aboriginal standpoint is not to nitpick endlessly over numbers and definitions, not to argue and bluster and condemn, but rather to employ what Deborah Bird-Rose has called "active silence".

For Indigenous people, and for people of good heart everywhere, the best response would have been to have had an opportunity simply to stop, and listen. To bear witness as individuals to what had happened; to respect the pain of the stolen. To treat the whole affair with seriousness, as real Sorry Business demands. We can't know, of course, how many ordinary people have tried to do so, but with – is it a million? – signatures on the Sorry Books, surely a lot must have. With leadership instead of spite from the Howard Government, that opportunity could have been provided. With respect instead of hysteria from the racist Right, our Sorry Business could have been dealt with, instead of being endlessly recycled for media consumption.

My friend is a Murri woman, stolen from a Queensland mission as a young child and now thirty-three years old. She was raised Aboriginal, but has not found her birth family. We ran into each other twelve months ago, last NAIDOC day in Musgrave Park, as the furore over the Howard non-apology raged. We spoke of a mutual friend, a black man, also stolen, and agreed that he wasn't travelling too well since the media frenzy erupted. He was drinking a lot more, smoking a lot more, away from home a lot more . . . lost, violent, haunted.

"The Inquiry has just fucked all our heads in" my friend told me (she supported and attended the Inquiry, cried at the back, but couldn't bring herself to testify). "They just won't shut up about it, will they?" she asked me in some anguish, meaning the mainstream commentators. Despairingly, she added, "I don't want an apology from that prick, I don't want to hear them going on and on and on about it . . . I just want them to shut up."

I'm alive, and my woman friend is alive; the stolen black man is not. Murris live on the razor-edge of reason a lot of the time, and it often doesn't take a lot to tip us over. Many, many of the stolen children have since died in custody, or drunk or drugged themselves to death, or deliberately suicided. For our black mate, the Inquiry, the aftermath, the bullshit, was all too much. I don't care how many histories you read, or phrases you pedantically dissect, or how many ashes you rake over, there's no taking the 'murder' out of that man's death. Mick Dodson and Ronald Wilson said it. It was genocide. Robert Manne agrees with them, and so do I.

A Scribbling Generation of the Right

John McLaren

WHEN HE LOOKED BACK on his years in the Communist Party – years that had been

filled with hope and the joys of comradeship – Stephen Murray-Smith was filled with remorse for the lies that had destroyed the ideals. He wrote to Keith McEwen that the years 1954 to 1958 had been a time of agony as he had become haunted by "the Stalinist corruption that truth exists to be handed down from on high, that it is not to be hammered out by testing against each other the minds and experiences of men of goodwill". Today, it is the ideologues on the right who are trying to suppress the debate that will enable the truth of our history to be discovered. But then, it would be hard to describe these writers as men or women of goodwill.

Robert Manne's essay, *In Denial*, is a remarkable piece of writing. Such luminaries as the local editor of *Time* have attempted to dismiss it because it is polemic rather than reportage, as though reportage is not always and necessarily selective, and *Time*'s reportage does not constitute a sustained polemic in favour of capitalism and the American way of life. But the extraordinary value of Manne's essay is the way its indictment of Australia's racist policies towards Aboriginal children is based on original research and analysis beyond the reach of any of its critics.

This is not the place to canvass either Manne's recounting of the stories of the stolen generation or the qualifications he makes to other accounts, including the report of the Wilson-Dodson inquiry – *Bringing Them Home* – that popularized the term 'Stolen Generation'. What is of immediate concern is the response of those he criticises, and the way they have been able again to turn the argument back on the victims, rather than on the perpetrators. It is of only incidental interest to notice that most of these deniers of the proposition that a generation of Aborigines was stolen are in the pay of multinational corporations who stand to lose most from an acceptance of responsibility for our collective past.

The response to Manne's essay by critics of the idea of a stolen generation has not been to answer his charges, but rather to emphasize his qualifications to the Wilson-Dodson report, to acknowledge that some wrongs may have been done in the past, and to urge that we now forget them and get on with the task of "practical reconciliation", and to accuse Manne of improper obsession. In other words, we should forget our own past and leave the future to the same kind of government institutions that proved so incapable and vicious in that past. Peter Howson (*The Age*, 3 April 2001) accepts that "some improper removals occurred pre-World War II", but otherwise claims there is "no substantive evidence of the reason for the removals". His claims that generally they were for the welfare of the children ignores Manne's documentation of the racist reasons motivating the policies of men like Neville, Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory. Howson concludes that "It is a sad indictment of academia" that it is not "seeking solutions to the serious problems of the small minority of Aborigines who have not moved to the urban centres and inter-married with non-indigenes." As well as ignoring the problems of urban Aborigines, this restates as a solution the racist and discredited assimilationist policies of the thirties. Ron Brunton (*The Age*, 4 April 2001) agrees that "at various times and places over the past century an unknown but significant number of part-Aboriginal children were wrongly taken from loving families", and agrees that an apology should be offered by the Commonwealth. However, he argues that the apology should emphasize that the wrongs arose from "a belief that Aborigines were a different kind of human being, requiring special laws and policies – a belief that still exists". He is thus able to confound those who wanted to "breed out" Aboriginality with those who recognize that a dispossessed people have different claims on the state from the dispossessors.

Frank Devine (*The Australian*, 5 April 2000) claims that it is Manne, not the right, who is obsessed. He falsely asserts that Manne claims there has been a right-wing conspiracy, rather than a co-ordinated, and very public campaign, to discredit the report. He argues, on the basis of a dictionary definition, that Australia's policies towards Aborigines cannot be characterized as genocide. Manne does not do so – he argues, on the basis of a careful examination of the meanings of the term genocide – that *at particular times* they were genocidal. Devine says that he

accepts as fact the suffering of Aborigines at the hands of the European settlers, but argues that Manne is merely using this fact to play an intellectual game that quite properly had him dismissed from the editorship of *Quadrant*.

It is impossible to read Manne's accounts – based on his own research as well as on the *Bringing Them Home* report – without recognizing that vile injustice has been perpetrated by our governments on their helpless victims. The most apt description of his critics comes from Paul Keating. At the launch of Manne's essay he wondered whether "there is anything in contemporary Australian life more outrageous than the sight of the most powerful figures of Australian conservatism cloaking their well-nourished frames in the rags of the powerless?" It is to be hoped that the *Australian Quarterly Essay* will continue to publish writers who are prepared to assert justice in the face of that power, rather than bland essayists asserting social harmony and aesthetic transcendence.

Manne's 'Rightness'

Jennifer Rose

In 1998 Robert Manne left *Quadrant* and began to write on the Stolen Generations in the mainstream press. At the time I was an Arts student studying Australian History and Koori Studies and a tutor of Indigenous students completing a bridging course for tertiary entry. One of my students presented an editorial which she had analysed for class. It was written by Robert Manne for *Quadrant* in the June edition of 1992. 'Mr Keating and the Flag', contained Manne's thoughts on why Australia's flag should not be changed. Manne suggested that in changing its flag, a nation was "signalling a fracture in its history, even a certain disdain for its past". The interests of Indigenous Australians did not bear a mention in Manne's analysis. Instead, Manne wrote that "despite recent attempts to turn our past into a story of colonial oppression by a British overlord, during its first 150 years most Australians felt quite real loyalty to both the British Empire and to Australia". The student had usually struggled to formulate written responses of this kind, but on this occasion her words flowed to the page as she asked, less than politely, that Robert Manne put himself in her shoes.

Before 1997, I was not familiar with Manne's work at all. Knowing that *Quadrant* was a conservative publication I didn't bother to read it. If I had been a *Quadrant* reader in 1993, I would have been exposed to Manne's explanation of 'Why I am not a Republican' or his thoughts 'On Political Correctness'. It was both with scepticism and curiosity that I began to study Manne's articles in the mainstream press on the issue of the Stolen Generations. While acknowledging that the article my student and I had studied was five years old at this time, I was puzzled by what seemed to be a profound shift in Manne's position. I could not help but wonder how an academic regarded as one of Australia's most important public intellectuals could have only relatively recently stumbled across the grave injustices done to Aboriginal people throughout our history. After all, the litany of injustices had been vastly documented and was available to anybody who bothered to look. As Manne acknowledges in *In Denial*, the 'Stolen Generations' was a term coined in 1981 when Peter Read published his research into the removal of Aboriginal children from their families in New South Wales.

In 1997 I read Manne's explanation of why he had left *Quadrant* in an article entitled 'Between the Party Lines' which appeared in *The Age* on 17 November. While it was clear that Manne was in conflict with characters such as Les Murray and Dame Leonie Kramer on a range of Indigenous issues, it was easy to believe that anyone of intellectual integrity might fall out of favour with such individuals. However, this brought me to a more important question. Why were Manne's reasons for resigning as editor of a small-circulation publication deemed newsworthy by *The Age*? Wasn't this an issue that primarily concerned *Quadrant* readers; or was it of importance to the readership of a statewide newspaper? Perhaps *The Age* editorship believed that – considering how regularly they had given space to *Quadrant* writers – the public would be interested in the details of the quarrels between the magazine's board members.

I wondered why Manne was

receiving so much space in the mass media to discuss the Stolen Generations when at that point he was no expert in the field. Manne had been frequently published in the broadsheet dailies. Editors of other publications such as *Meanjin, Arena, HEAT* or *overland* don't appear to have been granted the same access to the mainstream press. Aside from questioning the obvious imbalance in the volume of public space granted to intellectuals of the Right, I also began to wonder if Manne's self-confessed position as someone relatively new to the issue might have played some role in why his opinion was being so regularly sought. The 'we didn't know' or 'why weren't we told' rhetoric, while valid on one level – considering what Stanner identified as "the great Australian silence" – is also open to abuse by conservatives. It ranges in function, from making the issue more palatable to non-Indigenous readers to being used as a tool by the Howard Government to relinquish any responsibility for the removal of Aboriginal children.

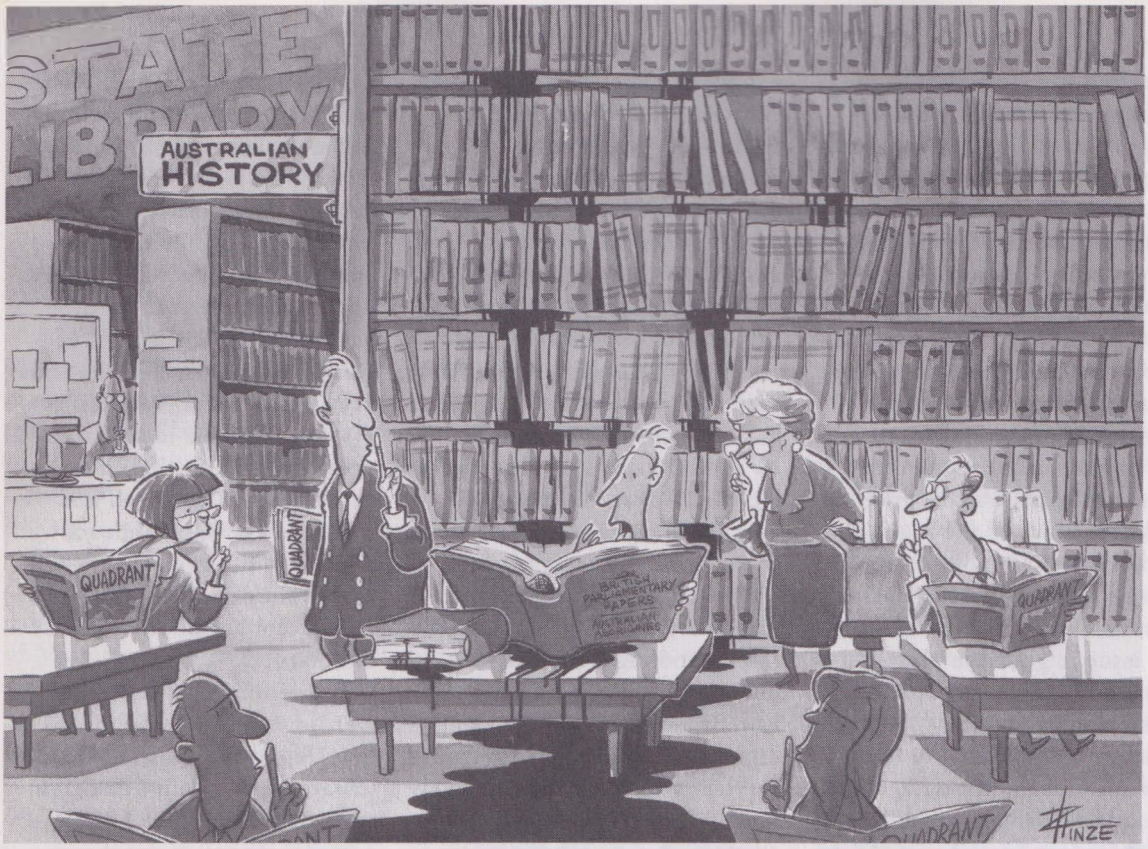
Manne could represent the 'everyman' trying to make sense of the Stolen Generations. The general readership has perhaps benefited from the gradual pace of Manne's intellectual growth on this issue. It has given them a chance to catch up with what people who have researched this area and, most importantly, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, have known for a long time. For me, Manne could 'say all the right things' but he would gain no real credibility until he engaged seriously and critically with the position from which he had come – the position which had given him a great deal of access to the mainstream media. In other words, Manne needed to engage critically with the Right.

The publication of Manne's *In Denial* is important for two reasons. The essay presents in very clear and detailed terms the nature of the campaign waged by McGuinness's *Quadrant*, the Howard Government and a handful of right-wing journalists to undermine *Bringing them Home*. Manne's analysis lands some very effective blows to the fast-dwindling credibility of characters like McGuinness and Ron Brunton. In presenting an argument which points to the ways in which intellectual and political conservatives were supporting each other's interests, it also signals the possibility that Manne may be seriously and critically engaging with the nature of conservative intellectualism and politics.

Manne manages, through his own research of the forced removal of Aboriginal children, to discredit both the arguments put forth by figures of the Right, in publications such as Brunton's *Betraying the Victims*, and the insidious ways in which Howard's Government has capitalized on these publications. Yet his attempt to analyse why this campaign was launched in the first place could have been extended beyond pointing out the ways in which conservative politicians and conservative intellectuals have articulated their campaign in various public forums. It could consider the profound ways that political or social conservatism and intellectual conservatism are mutually supportive. Social conservatism is characterized by the belief that the existing social order is more or less 'natural', 'inevitable' or 'justified'. Intellectual conservatism is characterized by the belief that there is one 'true' version of history and that this 'truth' is being threatened by the arrival of the idea that 'truth' is, at least in part, an expression of historical and social power. One philosophy reinforces the social order; the other reinforces the ways in which that social order is understood.

In the final chapter of *In Denial* Manne asks "Why has so much energy been expended in the attempt to deny . . . that a really terrible injustice occurred?" He concludes that the "tense debate over the stolen generations and the attack on the credibility of *Bringing them Home* is part of a larger culture war – over the meaning of Aboriginal dispossession". Certainly, it is an attempt to deny the reality of dispossession. However, an understanding that the aim of conservatism is to preserve the existing social order helps us to understand that the narratives of *Bringing them Home* will never find their rightful position in our history if viewed within a conservative framework.

There are some easily identified techniques commonly employed by the Right in undermining Indigenous political struggle generally. One is to rely on traditional 'white' sources and to ignore Aboriginal voices. Manne correctly remarks on the ways the Right has



attempted to ignore the involvement of Aboriginal people in the construction of the *Bringing them Home* report. He points to the lack of reference to Mick Dodson's role as co-chairman, with Sir Ronald Wilson, of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Inquiry. Again, in analysing the invisibility of Dodson, his analysis could be extended. He suggests, somewhat naively, that the Right ignores Dodson's role in the Inquiry because, "as an Aborigine, he was assumed irrelevant to its work and outcome". Yes he is ignored because he is Aboriginal; but this was surely part of the Right's campaign to present the issue of the Stolen Generations as having been constructed and controlled by elitist, guilt-ridden, bleeding-heart 'white' lefties. Whether it be through ignoring Dodson or suggesting that the individuals who gave testimony of their own experiences of removal to the inquiry are suffering from collective false memory syndrome, the agenda to keep Aboriginal voices at the fringe is clear.

If Manne's analysis of the relationship between intellectual and political conservatism had gone a little further, it may have helped us address some of the questions raised above. We might have some insight into why intellectuals of the Right receive greater access to the mainstream press. We might better understand why the pace of general debate about the Stolen Generations has moved with a slow progression which is signified by the role that Manne has found in 'holding the hand' of the general readership and guiding them through the issues. I am not berating him for doing that, simply pointing out the disappointing reality that it happened this way, and asserting that if the Right did not monopolize public space, perhaps we wouldn't have had to endure the voice of middle Australia asking 'why weren't we told?'

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Raymond Evans and Bill Thorpe

Indigenocide and the Massacre of Aboriginal History

We may be through with the past,
but the past is not through with us.
Magnolia

LIKE ALL CULTURAL productions, *Quadrant*'s recent articles and opinions on Indigenous issues have surfaced in particular historical contexts around certain issues and political circumstances. Most pertinently, these are the gains that some Indigenous Australians have made during the 1990s – the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (1990–2000), the 1992 Mabo judgement, the 1993 Native Title legislation, the 1996 Wik judgement, the 1998 national 'Sorry Day', the 'Stolen Generations' report (1997), the Walks for Reconciliation (2000) and, not least, the numerous apologies that settler Australians have made to Aboriginal people even if Prime Minister Howard refuses to offer one on behalf of his government.

These events have important implications for relations between settler-Australians and Indigenous Australians but such gains are also symbolic and ambiguous. As has been observed, those settler-Australians hoping for a "postcolonial apology" are attempting to redeem themselves "as settlers who properly belong" to this country, not the heirs of colonials who dispossessed and massacred Aborigines.[1] Paralleling *Quadrant*'s disbelief about the 'stolen generations', the several legal challenges on this issue (most notably, the Gunner–Cubillo case) have stalled in the courts. Native title claims have failed in all but a few cases. Contrary to popular belief, native title has been extinguished on privately owned land (including family homes), residential and commercial leases, and areas where governments have built roads, schools and public works. The Wik judgement maintained the rights of pastoral leaseholders.[2] A 1995 Royal Commission in South Australia found that certain 'women's business' relating to Hindmarsh Island (Kumarangk) was 'fabricated', and the bridge these women and their supporters objected to is now built.[3]

Keith Windschuttle and *Quadrant* hold to the absurd proposition that Aboriginal Australians will not be content until they have regained all the land that they forfeited under colonization.[4] Informing some of the most recent *Quadrant* opinion pieces, moreover, especially Windschuttle's, is an uncritical imperialist discourse which valorizes the Roman Empire and Roman Law as the fount of what is 'best' about Western civilization and, by extension, what the British brought to Australia.[5] This patrician ideology inflects *Quadrant*'s more populist rhetoric which can be traced from the early to mid-1980s; and other, more recent populism like that driving Pauline Hanson's One Nation party, to demonize 'the so-called politically correct' – who include, typically, 'multiculturalists', 'Asian immigrants', 'elites', 'the media', 'the Aboriginal industry', and the 'universities'.[6]

Such ideological labelling, however, does not advance knowledge or understanding much. We could typify P.P. McGuinness, Windschuttle and *Quadrant*'s politics as 'patriotically correct', in a 'culture of complaint' whose views on a range of issues are close to those of the right or fundamentalist wing of the United States' Republican Party during the 1980s.[7] In any event, 'striving for moderation' or 'commonsense' (one of Howard's favourite words), or applying the notion that "truth is always in the middle is not merely false but demonstrably false".[8]

Inherent in the *Quadrant* campaign, among other things, are returns to three major tropes about Australia: *terra nullius*; the 'Great Australian Silence'; and the 'quiet continent' thesis. *Terra nullius* legally defined Aboriginal Australian land as practically unoccupied when Cook claimed eastern Australia for George III in 1770 – until the Mabo judgement of June 1992. The 'Great Australian Silence' refers to the deliberate forgetting that anthropologist, W.E.H. Stanner, identified in 1968, which largely omitted Indigenous Australians from most of Australia's aca-

demic and official histories. The 'quiet continent' thesis derives from Douglas Pike's 1962 book of the same name and interprets Australia's history as relatively peaceful, as well as largely ignoring Aboriginal people's presence in this history.[9]

Quadrant's forays into Aboriginal history and Aboriginal affairs have generated considerable interest, not only among intellectuals but also in the public arena. So far, however, relatively few professional or academic historians, apart from Reynolds, have questioned Windschuttle's and McGuinness's charges and no professional or academic historian has made an extended response to them. (The most sustained reply so far, at least from the Left, is Bob Gould's self-published pamphlet, several times revised.[10]) Apart from Reynolds, Broome and to a lesser extent Lyndall Ryan, Windschuttle directs his salvos mostly at writers and journalists like Philip Knightley and Roger Milliss who, although they have written historical accounts, are not academics.

Such ideological labelling does not advance knowledge or understanding much. We could typify McGuinness, Windschuttle and *Quadrant*'s politics as 'patriotically correct', in a 'culture of complaint' whose views on a range of issues are close to those of the Right or fundamentalist wing of the United States' Republican Party during the 1980s.

We are not dismissing non-academic history writing or making invidious comparisons between so-called 'professionals' and 'amateurs'. Academically-trained historians, nonetheless, base their interpretations on the attempt to disclose as much primary source material in as representative a range as possible; and this methodology, together with other techniques, provides more convincing empirical proofs than Windschuttle's random, chronologically-challenged approach. More seriously, Windschuttle fails to cite any unpublished archival or primary sources to support his interpretation, so his analysis cannot have any scholarly claims to history.

'Bookend history'

WINDSCHUTTLE STAKES MUCH of his case against widespread frontier conflict on four examples: the 'battle of Pinjarra' in 1834 (Western Australia); Waterloo Creek in 1838 (New South Wales); Forrest River in 1926 (Western Australia); and Coniston River in 1928 (Northern Territory). He claims that these rest mostly on shaky, or non-existent, empirical foundations. On the other hand, he emphasizes that there is much more reliable material about Aborigines killing settlers and that these deaths can be counted, whereas "mass killings of Aborigines were rare and isolated phenomena".[11] Windschuttle also infers that the settler-colonials were the major aggrieved party here because the supposedly superior and more meticulously gathered evidence of *their* "violent deaths" proves it.

Windschuttle writes with the confidence of one who has trumped his adversaries. But on closer inspection this apparent triumph is far less convincing. While there are certainly more detailed accounts of settler-colonial fatalities compared to Aboriginal ones as a result of frontier violence, the historical record is not as bereft of equivalent evidence as Windschuttle assumes. There is a reputable source that compares the ratio of Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal deaths in the 'North Western District' of Port Phillip (Victoria) in 1838–1841 – namely a 'Return of the Number of HOMICIDES committed respectively by Blacks and Whites'. According to this report, Aborigines killed eight 'White People' while 'Whites' killed forty-three Aborigines.[12] Windschuttle has missed this source, which is part of the *British Parliamentary Papers* volumes held in most state and university libraries and hence quite accessible to researchers. He accuses historians, missionaries and writers who have multiplied the ratio of Aboriginal deaths to non-Aboriginal deaths of inventing numbers but he needs to get his own empirical house in order.

Let us examine this issue a little further. Windschuttle's discovery that there is more comprehensive detail about settler deaths does not surprise historians familiar with Australian frontier history. With some exceptions, media reports, official enquiries, depositions and the like invariably attempted to calculate the numbers of 'white' or non-Indigenous deaths more scrupulously than they did when addressing Indigenous deaths, particularly in frontier

situations. Because White lives were considered more precious than Aboriginal ones, a bias towards enumerating settler fatalities exists in the historical record. Sometimes, names of Aboriginal aggressors, real or alleged, are noted but most accounts refer to them as 'the natives', 'the blacks', 'savages' or 'semi-savages'. Reports of Aboriginal deaths and reprisals against Aborigines tend to be more vague, especially about numbers, while any mention of the names of Aboriginal victims is unusual.[13] And this does not even cover the perennial problem for historians of Aboriginal–settler race relations, namely the evidence that, one way or another, has gone 'missing'.[14]

The main point here, however, is that the shifting, unreliable quantitative evidence makes it difficult if not impossible to make direct comparisons. Nineteenth-century observers and officials who collated these estimates did not have the training of late-twentieth-century researchers to devise the statistically meaningful techniques of mathematically-informed social science. More importantly, even if they did, it is highly doubtful whether they *would* have bothered to construct representative samples of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. We know this because few censuses (as distinct from estimates) were done on Aboriginal people until the twentieth century. Part of the reason for this was the widespread belief that Aborigines were a 'dying race'.[15] Other reasons were more practical or pragmatic: colonial governments had neither the resources nor the personnel for the job. Moreover, distant Australian frontiers did not leave the comprehensive paper trails that the Nazi concentration camp system did. In other words, Windschuttle is pursuing an ahistorical chimera. We need to adopt other approaches to make sense of what happened – considerations developed in the third part of this article.

The title of this section draws attention to one of Windschuttle's tactics – a method we have called 'bookend history'. The 'bookends', symbolically and chronologically, are the four massacre examples, noted above, and a number of others, at either end of an otherwise empty bookshelf: there are no volumes from 1839 to 1925 – the major period of frontier expansion. The 'Great Australian Silence' indeed! For that matter, why has Windschuttle begun in 1834 and ended in 1928 anyway? *What about the period from 1788 to 1834 or after 1928?*

Prior to 1834, Windschuttle would need to consider, for example, the Hawkesbury War of 1799; clashes with convict timbergetters in the 1790s in

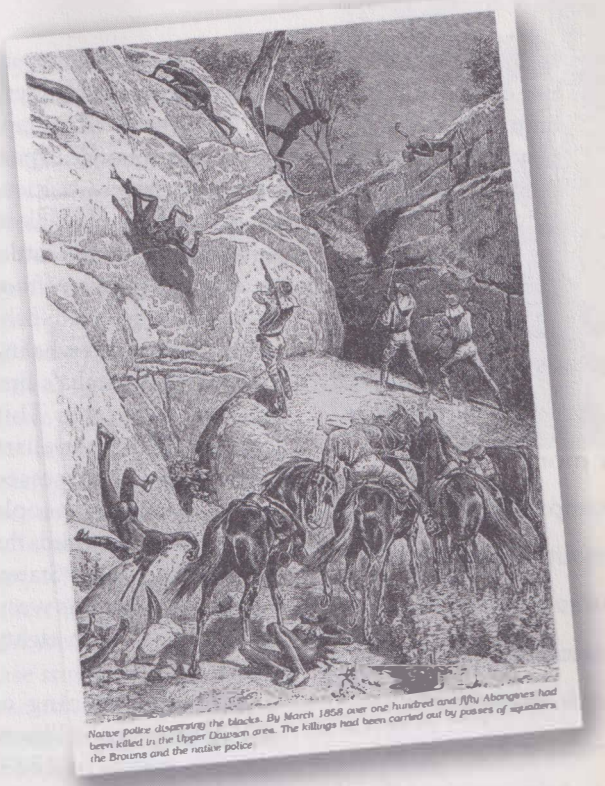


Illustration from Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and Maltreatment of Australian Aborigines since 1778, *Child and Associates, 1998, p.119.*

the Illawarra region of New South Wales; conflicts in 1804 at Coal River (Newcastle); the 46th Regiment's shooting of fourteen Aborigines in 1816 during Governor Macquarie's rule; Governor Brisbane's declaration of martial law in 1824 that reflected the serious state of frontier conflict in the Bathurst region; the 'rush' for pastoral land north of Sydney through the Hunter River region throughout the 1820s; the 'Black War' in Tasmania from 1824 to 1834; and the serious clashes that occurred in the early to mid-1830s as squatters fought to take up land further north in New South Wales on the Liverpool Plains and imperial troops battled Aborigines on the islands of Moreton Bay. If, at the other end of his chronology, he inquired beyond 1928, he would have to acknowledge the 'Christmas Creek massacre' in the Kimberleys during the 1930s where the perpetrators returned to the massacre site three times to ensure that there was no trace of the bodies; or the invidious situation in the Northern Territory where, even during the years of the Second World War, it was openly admitted that "it was nothing to shoot a black if he didn't do the right thing".[16]

But these fatal episodes, while serious and destructive of life and property on 'both sides of the frontier', did not match the scale and intensity of what happened in eastern Australia once the colony's export political economy moved more decisively, particularly after the early 1840s depression, towards exploiting land-based domestic animals like sheep and cattle, and land-based resources like minerals, and away from the already depleted 'fisheries' (sealing and whaling mostly) of Australia's first maritime frontier. This geographic imperialism effectively dispossessed most Aboriginal people from an area two-thirds the size of the United States, or almost as large as western Europe, within eighty years.

Windschuttle's 'discovery' that there is more comprehensive detail about settler deaths does not surprise historians familiar with Australian frontier history . . . Media reports, official enquiries, depositions and the like invariably attempted to calculate the numbers of 'white' or non-Indigenous deaths more scrupulously than they did when addressing Indigenous deaths, particularly in frontier situations.

At the beginning of this period, one 'collision' among many, in 1839, for example, was the Wiradjuri War where, in May that year in this bitter conflict along the Murrumbidgee, "posses of white settlers on both sides of the river trapped sixty or seventy Wiradjuri men, women and children on Murdering Island . . . and shot them down". Another was a massacre in 1840 in the Glen Ormiston district in western Port Phillip where the official deposition at an inquiry into this slaughter revealed that Glenormiston's overseer, Frederick Taylor, had surrounded a group of sleeping Aborigines and had shot thirty-four of them, afterwards throwing the corpses into a "neighbouring waterhole". Towards the close of this period, in much of northern Australia, murderous clashes, reprisal raids, and police actions occurred on what was mainly a cattle frontier. In 1899, for example, the Government resident of the Victoria River district in the Northern Territory reported that he had "no reason to doubt the information" that overlanders from Queensland in 1886 "regarded the native as they would a crow, and they shot down many . . ."[17]

THE OTHER, 'MISSING VOLUMES' on Windschuttle's modest bookshelf cover an even more disturbing series of events and loss of life. Some of these conflicts and encounters include the Rufus River massacre of Aborigines by a government force and private overlanders (1841); the Kilcoy (Queensland) poisoning of Aborigines (1842); the Macintyre River War (1840–1849) where the Native Police first saw action in Queensland; the Wide Bay–Burnett War (1853); the extended vigilante and State reprisals following the 1857 Hornet Bank massacre (where Jiman tribesmen murdered most of the Fraser family); the Wills massacre of 1861 ("the largest single mass killing of Europeans by Aborigines in Australian history"); the 1878–1884 Kalkadoon War where whites and the Native Police killed hundreds of Aborigines in three separate raids; and the virtual obliteration of the Karangpurru people of the Northern Territory between 1886 and 1894.[18]

Windschuttle claims that there was only one 'genuine' massacre of Aboriginal people in Australian history (Myall Creek in 1838).[19] By 'genuine' he means that these were victims who were essentially 'innocent bystanders', not Aboriginal warriors fighting their foes as in a battle or skirmish. He generalizes from this to suggest that there were no other such 'genuine' massacres. Apart from the point that Windschuttle ignores completely the possibility that a 'battle' (particularly between technologically uneven forces) can turn into a 'rout' and then a 'massacre',[20] his argument here reveals a number of fallacies.

One such fallacy is a variation of 'the lonely fact'. The 'genuine' Myall Creek example becomes a quantifiable generalization, therefore there are no more 'genuine' massacres. Related to this is a form of special pleading: Windschuttle applies his critical standards to evidence that he finds unsatisfactory (e.g. that of the missionaries Threlkeld and Gribble) but then leaves out entirely evidence which supports their findings. Thirdly, imbued in his analysis is the 'antinomian fallacy', namely the assumption that 'regularities do not exist in history, or that they do not exist significantly'. Thus, according to this logic (or lack of logic) there could not have been a pattern of violence on Australia's frontiers and there could not have been a series of massacres. From this position, Windschuttle reveals the 'pragmatic fallacy', selecting the examples

he does 'to substantiate the thesis one hopes is true'.[21] These latter two fallacies return us to what we call the 'exceptionalist fallacy' or the 'uniqueness problem': Australia is 'unique' because it was settled peacefully (unlike other colonized countries).

Windschuttle urges that historians "should only accept evidence of violent deaths, Aboriginal or otherwise, where there is a minimum amount of direct evidence". For him this means "genuine eyewitnesses" to massacres, or those who "at least saw the bodies afterwards". Such reports, ideally, "should be independently corroborated". Windschuttle is also prepared to accept "admissions of guilt by those concerned, provided they are recorded first-hand".[22]

Let us see whether Windschuttle follows this advice. As we pointed out before, historians in their practice subscribe to distinctions between sources, or traces of past events, that are based on their proximity or otherwise to the events or persons in question. Proximity here has a double meaning: proximity in the sense of direct, 'first-hand' experience (either/both as participant or witness); and temporal proximity (whether or not the participant/witness recorded what he/she experienced at the time, soon afterwards, or many years later). Proximate sources have added validity because they are examples of '*unintended* evidence': materials that are either not written for posterity or those which survive 'for reasons independent of the actors' intentions'.[23] For these reasons and because they constitute examples of *intended* evidence, other accounts, by contrast, such as printed reports, official inquiries, books, articles, stories, films and broadcasts that are produced after the events themselves (and sometimes many years afterwards) have less credibility in historians' eyes as sources although this does not make them invalid or untrue.

However, much of the documentation that Windschuttle deploys to disparage *his* selection of missionaries', journalists' and historians' accounts is not 'first-hand' or 'proximate' at all. He cites the New South Wales *Government Gazette,* a West Australian police investigation, a Royal Commission, a Commonwealth Board of Inquiry, and the *Historical Records of Australia.* All these are either official, printed contemporary, or near-contemporary sources, or printed primary sources. The closest Windschuttle gets to 'direct evidence' is Lancelot Threlkeld's edited letters and papers – which Windschuttle then dismisses as "third-hand reports". Furthermore, most of Windschuttle's argument about the 'fabrication' of massacre stories depends on secondary works, notably Rod Moran's pugnacious and speculative *Massacre Myth,* which was published over fifty years after the events at the Forrest River mission.[24]

As well as the gratuitous guidance Windschuttle offers to historians we would add two further, related criteria of our own: direct evidence *from* those who did not feel guilty about massacring Aborigines; and direct evidence *about* those who massacred Aborigines, whether or not these killers felt remorseful. Below we reproduce primary case studies from our own research of the Queensland frontier that meet these two criteria, as well as the other tests that Windschuttle insists on but himself evades.

But it is not even necessary to go to 'original', or 'first-hand' testimony to prove examples of 'frontier violence'; we can use the same type of documentation that Windschuttle approves of and which, in his own words, is "quite easy for anyone to check for themselves". Two of these sources are the *British Parliamentary Papers: Papers relating to Emigration, the Aboriginal Population and Other Affairs in Australia,* and the *British Parliamentary Papers: Correspondence relative to Emigration,* volume 21, republished in 1969. As noted earlier, most state government and university libraries have these volumes.

Decades of hard-won research, sifting through manuscript collections, archives, and newspaper files searching for some approximation to the weary truth about Australian colonialism appears to count for nothing in this unseemly rush to judgement.

In them the reader will find a range of material, mainly about the Port Phillip district (Victoria), Western Australia, and Tasmania dating from 1839 to 1844 as follows:

1. Contemporary letters, for example one dated 14 July 1840 from Melbourne which claimed that the proprietors of an out-station near Portland Bay (on Victoria's west coast) murdered thirty-six of

the thirty-eight Aborigines allegedly responsible for stealing several hundred sheep.

2. Depositions from witnesses like Aylward at the Grampians in June 1840 who saw "blood upon the grass, and in the tea tree two or three dead bodies", and from William Whyte in the same district who stated that twenty-eight out of thirty Aborigines were killed.

3. Protectors' and Sub-Protectors' statements about pastoral employees like William Taylor, an overseer at 'Coligan' sheep station, Lake Colac, who was "notorious for killing natives", particularly the Jacoort people of "all ages and sexes under 40", single-handedly reducing this once "very numerous and powerful people" to sixty survivors.

4. Statements from Aborigines, which an investigation into frontier violence in the Pyrenees district of Victoria found "more dependable" than other testimony when they gave the names of seven Aborigines shot by a "Mr Frances within the last 6 months".[25]

Windschuttle's readers could gain a misleading impression that the handful of historians and authors whom he cites (Reynolds, Richard Broome, Lyndall Ryan, Roger Milliss, Phillip Knightley, Sandy Yarwood) as exemplars of Aboriginal and Australian history are a representative sample of those who have published in these fields over the past twenty or thirty years. To be sure, Reynolds and Broome are major, widely-published figures. Lyndall Ryan's *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* (1981 and 1996) is still the major, current non-Indigenous academic history. At the same time, Windschuttle appears ignorant of many other academics who have produced important studies since the 1970s to the present. Windschuttle draws on some of Charles Rowley's and Andrew Markus's work but has failed to discuss volumes by Tom Austen, Geoffrey Blomfield, Bruce Breslin, Timothy Bottoms, Ian Clark, Michael Christie, Jan Critchett, Bruce Elder, Peter Gardner, Ann McGrath, David Trigger, Raymond Evans, Barry Morris, Roslyn Kidd, Anna Haebich, Deborah Bird Rose, Alan Pope, Peggy Brock, Howard Pederson, Graham Jenkin, Michael Cannon, Gordon Reid, Peter Biskup, Max Griffiths, Jakelin Troy, Cassandra Pybus, Peter Read, Dawn May, Don Watson, Bain Attwood, Bob Reece, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, Ian MacLean, and Chris Healy. Such studies contain scores of examples of massacres and mass killings.

Aside from these non-Indigenous accounts, Windschuttle ignores the Aboriginal academics, historians and other authors who have written and spoken about the realities of Australian history for them from various perspectives, for example Charles Perkins, Kevin Gilbert, James Miller, Bill Rosser, Jackie and Rita Huggins, Ruth Hegarty, Ruby Langford Ginibi, Marnie Kennedy, Sally Morgan, Roberta Sykes, Wayne Coolwell, Jimmie Barker, Evelyn Crawford, Doreen Kartinyeri, Christobel Mattingley and Ken Hampton, Irene Watson, Oodgeroo, Colin and Eleanor Bourke, and Joe McGinness.

Unearthing the Forgotten

Even the most cursory survey of the vast, thoroughly documented literature on frontier violence and Aboriginal destruction in Queensland discloses how limited Windschuttle's empirical spadework is and the narrow ideological trench it has dug. Decades of hard-won research, sifting through manuscript collections, archives, and newspaper files searching for some approximation to the weary truth about Australian colonialism appears to count for nothing in this unseemly rush to judgement. As in the blinkered 'Quiet Continent' writings, the rich vein of data dealing with mortal conflict is met yet again with the methodology of turning a blind eye – reducing mountains of sombre evidential knowledge to little more than a hill of beans.

No single, definitive account has been produced to date about the devastating effects the Queensland Native Mounted Police had from 1848 to the 1910s, although this lacunae is being rectified. This force performed at its lethal peak against Aboriginal peoples during the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s – its killing capacity maximized when Snider breech-loading rifles replaced muzzle loaders in the 1870s. Whereas muzzle-loading rifles had an average discharge of two shots per minute, Sniders could fire five times faster. And while we cannot provide a headcount of the Aboriginal corpses resulting from thousands of Native Police patrols over more than six decades of frontier warfare, we can suggest that their actions alone produced the estimated, conservative count of 10,000 violent Aboriginal deaths in Queensland, without even including the fatal effects of settler 'shoot-on-sight' activities.[26]

Consider this: Up to two hundred mounted Aboriginal troopers, in killing squads of six to eight, and sometimes twelve to eighteen, scattered across Queensland, each armed with a Snider breech-loader, and led by white officers armed with Colt or Tranter revolvers. Each squad carried out monthly patrols, each patrol leading to an undisclosed number of 'collisions' and 'dispersals' of local Aborigines. In each 'dispersal' numbers of Aborigines were slaughtered by expert marksmen. Alan Hillier, who has made an exhaustive study of the force, notes that:

> The Native Police were the most efficient colonial police force in the world in its day. . . . Aboriginal troopers were . . . well-trained killing machines, [expert] in the use of rifle, pistol, bowie knife, metal tomahawk, plus the traditional Aboriginal weapons of spear, boomerang, nulla, shield and tomahawk . . . They were well-drilled soldiers, and were excellent horsemen . . . at the peak of physical fitness, extremely agile and resilient, with an ability to live off the land, and suffer privations to a greater extent than any European . . .[27]

Operating as a form of mounted infantry, capable of fighting from horseback or on foot, they were especially adapted to counter Aboriginal resistance. Hillier again:

> In the open country, Aboriginal methods of warfare were almost useless against a man on horseback . . . In many cases officers would open fire on large groups of myalls from a distance of eighty to one hundred yards or more in a stand-up fight. If the myalls ran, they were followed and run down by the troopers on horseback, or shot or dispersed whilst lying on the ground. If the native police encountered a large mob of one hundred Aborigines or more, the tactics used were hit and run. This involved firing on a mob from a distance to disperse them into smaller groups . . . The police would then keep pace by tracking the mob for a day, and then return to hit the same mob in another attack. The process . . . would often last a week, as native police patrols could last up to fourteen days. If these . . . methods failed to destroy the tribe, they would be marked down for another patrol in the following month, when the tribe's camp would be attacked in a dawn raid without warning . . . the troopers would destroy the camps and all items of value, for example spears, cooking utensils, fishing gear and the means of carrying water. This destruction of the means of survival would influence the abilities of old men, women and children to survive in the harsh Australian bush, and many died from starvation and thirst.[28]

We have quoted this passage at length because the events outlined in it could never have happened in Windschuttle's wishfully exonerative account, yet

The recommended currency-exchange was never simply that of 'an eye for an eye'. The kill ratio varied according to circumstances – five, ten, twenty or even fifty to one.

they did consistently – albeit mainly in secret. We will never know the numbers of deaths, kidnappings, rapes, acts of torture, summary floggings and executions of troopers, or of Aborigines shot while 'escaping from custody' during this whole 'sorry business'. But, in the context of separating myth from reality, does it *matter* that no-one will ever provide unquestionably accurate statistics about these events?

The ubiquity of euphemism which matched the ubiquity of massacre made reliable enumeration impossible, quite apart from the other difficulties noted in section two. The transparency of the word 'dispersal' to describe Native Police and other, more private police actions became a standing colonial 'cold joke'.[29] When Belgian-born William Armit, who had been a Native Police officer in Queensland between 1872 and 1882, repeated his destructive performance as a Patrol Officer in the Tamata District of New Guinea in 1900 he was asked officially for the first time to explain what 'dispersal' and terminology like 'a salutary lesson' actually meant. In this instance the words had been used to camouflage the deaths of fifty-four tribespeople and the wounding

of many more.[30] "Do we shoot them? Of course we do," another Native Police officer, writing as 'Old Chum', admitted in 1877:

> The popular idea is to disperse them by shooting over their heads. Bah! Only people who know nothing about wild myalls would imagine that they would be afraid of that sort of thing. One thing is certain: if you point a gun at a nigger to frighten him you had better let him have it straight, or you are very likely to find a spear sticking in your back as soon as you turn away. There is only one way to keep the beggars down: when they commit a murder, pay them out for it in their own coin.[31]

The recommended currency-exchange, however, was never simply that of 'an eye for an eye'. The kill ratio varied according to circumstances – five, ten, twenty or even fifty to one.[32] In retaliation for Aborigines near Burketown "cutting steaks from the rumps of several horses", Sub-Inspector Wentworth D'Arcy Uhr conducted a "wholesale slaughter" of fifty-nine Aborigines in mid-1868. The newspaper which carried this account reported the following year that only thirty male Aborigines now survived in the Bowen district from the Juru people who, "not long ago could be numbered by hundreds" – killed not by disease or 'the bottle' but by

> the rifle . . . when the native police, to use the words of an eye-witness, visited the public house after their work at the shambles, "the heels of their boots covered with brains and blood and hair".[33]

Yet as the latter part of this disturbing quote implies, Queensland colonials regarded such carnage neither as exceptional nor sensational but rather as a routinized necessity in an officially undeclared warfront. It attained crescendos of retributive zeal when settler families, or others were killed *en masse* – such as the Frasers, the Wills, the Conns, the Straus, the Mulvo party, or the foolhardy *Maria* shipwreck survivors. After about a dozen of this latter group – hopeful gold-seekers *en route* to New Guinea in an old coal barge – died at the hands of Rockingham Bay Aborigines in early 1872, the *Sydney Morning Herald* called for volunteers "who could shoot straight" to avenge them and a ship, the *Governor Blackall* was requisitioned to carry the vigilantes, many armed with new Winchester rifles, northwards. Here, anticipating "a lot of action", new arrivals were placed under the command of Lieutenant Robert Johnstone, one of the most experienced bushmen and "most destructive officers employed by the Native Police". Together with Johnstone's eleven 'native' troopers, crew members of HMS *Basilisk*, and five boatloads of white Cardwell residents, they conducted reprisals lasting months. Follow-up raids on surviving Aborigines occurred between 1873 and 1878. Hillier comments:

> The effects . . . on the Rockingham Bay tribes were never recorded. Every camp fifty miles north of Cardwell was raided and destroyed. Many dispersals took place and the death toll . . . must have been high . . . Johnstone recorded in his memoirs that the Rockingham Bay tribes were the most numerous he had encountered on the frontier. By 1886 they had almost disappeared. The remnants were met by [Archibald] Meston in 1889. Here they expressed their fear of the Cardwell settlement and their hatred of the Native Police.[34]

Again, there are no accurate head-counts but what other conclusion could any reasonable person make than to surmise a massive death toll? In any event, as we argued elsewhere, few colonials could be bothered to collate demographic facts. What this example also shows is how Aboriginal troopers, frontier settlers and others acted together to suppress Aboriginal resistance and aggressions, thus intensifying the Native Police's already formidable power. Native Police officers themselves were usually well-established, integrated members of colonial society – the sons of pastoral families, whose land seizures they rode out to defend; or of military families with a tradition of fighting in Britain's imperial wars. Some of the most vengeful officers, moreover, came from those families whose members had been attacked, injured or murdered by Aborigines. One such was William Fraser, the eldest son of the slain Fraser family of Hornet Bank station. Following the massacre of nine of his family in 1857, Fraser, known to local Aborigines as 'debbil debbil', went on a rampage. In 1860 he admitted to shooting "Seventy blacks up to that date" using a "double-barrel shotgun cut down to carbine length".[35] In 1867, Fraser was inducted into the Native Police, under the command of the equally vengeful Frederick Wheeler, whose wife had been terrorized in an Aboriginal raid. Throughout his life, Fraser alone was responsible for the violent deaths of hundreds of

Aborigines – a fact that he openly acknowledged. The colonial state ignored his mass-murdering activities. For his part Wheeler was responsible for 'dispersing' Aborigines across south-east Queensland, before fleeing the colony after being arraigned for flogging a ten-year-old Aboriginal boy to death at Mistake Creek, north of Clermont, central Queensland, in 1876.[36]

Information like this is readily accessible to the experienced historical researcher but Windschuttle seems, either through unfamiliarity with the subject matter or political intent, to have been unable to factor any of it into his analysis. Indeed the sense we gain from such documentation not only reinforces conclusions about the ubiquity of frontier violence, it also reveals a colonial world-view that accepted such violence as normative and probably inevitable. No sooner had Gossner Society missionary, Brother Peter Niquet arrived at Circular Quay, Sydney in 1837 to board a schooner for Moreton Bay (Brisbane), than he was accosted by an elderly German settler who informed him that Aborigines were "less than human" and "fit only to be murdered and used as fertilizer". This settler boasted that he had shot thirty of them himself. Five years later, Niquet's colleague, Pastor K.W. Schmidt noted that "most of the cattle owners" in south-east Queensland would "shoot, poison, or set fire to [the poor natives] whenever the occasion arises".[37]

There is considerable evidence from people witnessing such massacres or admitting taking part in them. Such complicity usually became an ideological rationale to justify usurpation and its genocidal consequences. Frederick de Brebant Cooper, who had had substantial frontier experience in the United States and Mexico, wrote extensively in 1857 about reprisal raids in which he took part in Queensland and northern New South Wales. Describing assaults by a party of thirty "volunteers" out to teach Gwydir River Aborigines "better manners", he confided:

> we stuck to those scrubs up and down the river till . . . it was difficult to find a tree unmarked. You see they mark the timber . . . wherever a black falls . . .[38]

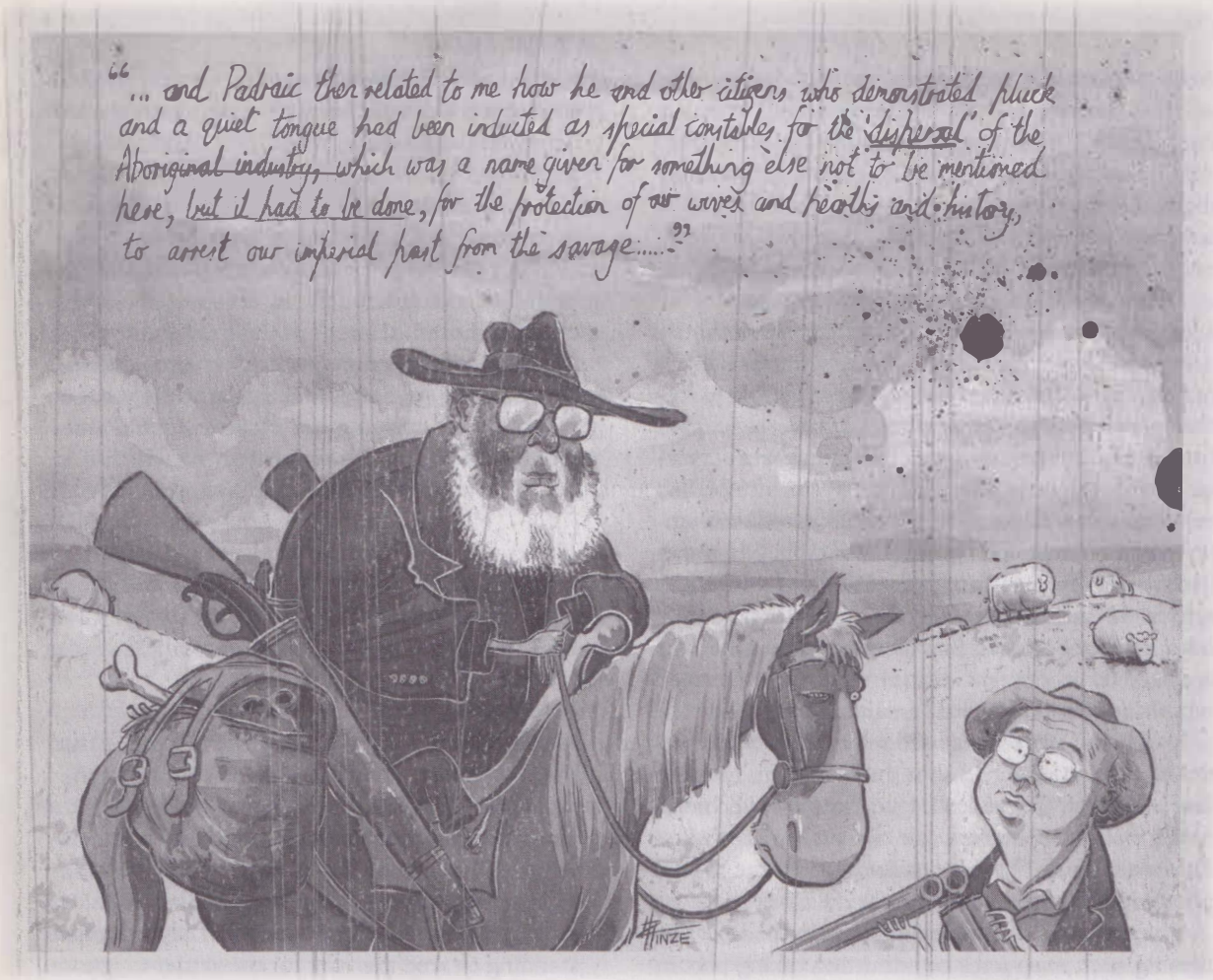
Visiting central Queensland following the Fraser massacre on the Dawson in late 1857, William Stamer noted:

> in most cases, the *lex talionis* was the order of the day . . . whole tribes had been rubbed out . . . No device by which the race could be exterminated had been left untried. They had been hunted and shot down like wild beasts – treacherously murdered whilst sleeping within the paddock rails, and poisoned wholesale by having arsenic or some other deadly substance mixed with the flour given to them for food. One 'lady' on the Upper Condamine had particularly distinguished herself in the poisoning line having, if report spoke the truth, disposed of more natives than any other squatter in the district by means of arsenic alone. There can be no doubt that this amiable woman . . . was only carrying out those inscrutable decrees of Providence, the wisdom of which it is not for us to question. We are the chosen race . . .[39]

The cynicism in Stamer's closing words is less apparent in scores of other vindicative accounts. Writing on behalf of the British Council for Civil Liberties in 1946, Geoffrey Parsons summarized this literature thus:

> settlers found it more convenient to assume that the Aborigine was a sort of anthropoid, higher perhaps than the marsupial in the biological scale on account of his resemblance to his white masters, but certainly incapable of any conscious social grouping and tradition, devoid alike of culture, religion or moral code. Such denial of his human standing cleared the way for the settler to ignore the Aborigine's rights as a man. If they did not recognize the existence of his property rights, they could not be violating them when they seized his land . . . and if he was so much less than a man, to kill him must be so much less than murder.[40]

IT IS INTENSELY DISCOMFORTING to conceive of an Australian social order where the mass murder of certain people, identifiable by their ethnicity, was a way of life, executed by a minority of perpetrators, tolerated by the settler majority, and winked at by a state which, in other settings, upheld the precepts of British culture, law and justice. This discomfort impels Windschuttle's analysis into denial, distortion and disremembering while contributing to its credibility. But the context of acceptable terror was the historical truth. "Where are our magistrates?" George Lang asked in rhetorical despair as he bore witness to the "horrid, indiscriminate murders" of over 150 Aboriginal "men, women and children" in the Wide Bay hinterland in 1857–58: "I reply, our magistates are all here and they might as well be in Jericho, they do not care a fig for



either law or justice and . . . are as guilty of every act of cruelty as the actual perpetrators".[41] The British Colonial Office in 1866 recognized that "the recklessness with which blacks have been destroyed . . . in Queensland" was a matter "by no means easy to exaggerate". Yet, it added chillingly, ". . . the Home government can but hold up its hands. *There is no effective power to interfere in their cause*"[42] [Emphasis added]. So the combination of an indifferent Australian colonial state and an ineffectual British imperial state meant that there was virtually no legal protection for British subjects if they also happened to be Aboriginal, whatever horrors were visited upon them. As one harried Aboriginal man told a station owner who was turning him off his property in 1847, "Which way you (go) supposing this way you shoot em supposing that way you shoot em all about shoot em".[43]

Press correspondents, albeit euphemistically, were quite open about this. An 'able bushman', calling himself 'Maori', wrote in 1880 of what he termed the 'wiping out' process: "There had been lust, rapine, treachery, bad faith, cruelty and downright savagery . . . and we have had the advantage of superior numbers, wealth, intelligence, arms and organization". Another frontiersman, with sixteen years' experience, signing himself 'Never Never' admitted:

> I am what would be called a 'white murderer' for I have had to 'disperse' and assist to disperse blacks on several occasions . . . Hide it as you will, our policy towards the black is bad, but it is only the game we played all over the world . . . The unanswerable fact remains that by overrunning this or any other country we expose the natives to the rigour of guerilla warfare – always the cruellest and worst – and knowing that, we come here and take up our quarters with our eyes open; by our very presence . . . justifying the act of every other white ruffian in the outside country – we must go to the whole length, and say that the sooner we

clear the weak useless race away the better. And being a *useless race what does it matter what they suffer?* [Our emphasis][44]

Such fatalistic rationalizations led logically to situations such as that which confronted Florence Young and her husband, Jonathan, at 'Umbercollie' near Goondiwindi, south-west Queensland in late 1848 when, first, white vigilantes and then visiting police shot down the Youngs' Aboriginal workers in cold blood (intent on literally killing off Aboriginal labour competition!). The first attack, led by a notorious killer of Aborigines, James Mark, was part of a wider series of raids conducted at Boonall station (where forty Bigambul people were shot), Carbucky, Callandoon and Broomfield. Early on the morning of 11 June 1848 Mrs Young wrote:

> Mr Marks [sic] and a team of men he had gathered arrived at our home, shooting every native in sight, even the station Aborigines, even my house gins . . . As these two gins were unarmed, and one was blind, they both had no chance of escape.[45]

One of the vigilantes, Daniel McLean, himself testified before the local magistrate:

> We all came up to the rails we could see the place where the blacks were lying we fired upon them . . . firing as fast as we could with cartridge . . . a gin planted by the side of the fence . . . got away. . . and ran – Steebie or Jones or Mark said 'Shoot her' – they fired upon her and she fell down close to the slip panel. When she fell Martin took his pistol and struck her once or twice on the head with it . . . we all fired upon her. We then put the net and cloaks on the fire and broke the spears and put them on the fire . . .[46]

Inside the homestead, the Youngs were immobilized with fear watching the slaughter. Mrs Young continued:

> At daylight, Jonathan went outside to get our two dead girls and bury them as already wild pigs were eating Maimie's body. This was a frightful sight beside our house . . . Some weeks later, the police came . . . shooting still more natives . . . We lost twelve of our station blacks. Two young gins ran to me for protection. I hid them up in a comer of our roof, behind some hay. They had to remain there for two days without food and water. The police were still in and out of our house . . . After the police had gone . . . we faced the terrible sight of so many dead natives, and this time the wild dogs had joined the pigs in tearing the bodies to pieces . . .[47]

Once again we are not simply attempting body-counts here but attending thoughtfully to the atmosphere of acceptable terror which surrounded these disturbing episodes. Although the Youngs themselves were horrified, Richard Bligh, the local Crown Lands Commissioner noted:

> It may give you some idea of the state of combination and system of terrorism existing in this locality when I state that though the murderers . . . are known to everyone [and] though the government have offered large rewards . . . yet not the smallest additional evidence has been given . . . and persons of respectability . . . have actually joined in a subscription set on foot for the defence of the parties accused.[48]

This then was the frontier pattern repeated over and over: settler killers with community consensus ultimately beyond the law; the colonial state mostly failing to curb private acts of excess while perpetuating its own excesses *via* the Native Mounted Police; and only the odd outraged, cornered or conscience-stricken individual prepared to tell or record the tale about Queensland's killing fields.

Korah Wills, an early mayor of Bowen (1865–67), and later of Mackay (1876–77) was one who, as an old man – and after retirement to his birthplace in Dover – decided to write it all down, in a partly confessional and partly boastful manner. Wills had been a corporal in the Victorian Volunteer Mounted Rifles and, at his testimonial dinner in August 1862 before going to Queensland, was presented with a patent Terry's breech-loading rifle which he soon put to effect on the Bowen frontier.[49] Wills related how he and any other male Bowen citizens who demonstrated "pluck and a quiet tongue" would be inducted as "special constables" to join forces with Aboriginal troopers under the control of G.E. Dalrymple, to "disperse" the Juru and Bindal peoples:

> which was a name given for something else not to be mentioned here, but it had to be done for the protection of our hearths and wives and families, and you may bet we were not backward in doing

> what we were ordered to do and what our forefathers would have done to keep possession of the soil . . . we have risked our lives . . . in arresting it from the savage . . . in my time they were dispersed by hundreds, if not by thousands . . .[50]

As Hillier, Noel Loos and Bruce Breslin all demonstrate, the Bowen to Cardwell region was one of the most bloodthirsty in Queensland with the local newspaper, the *Port Denison Times* advocating that, in reaction to the killing of any European, "we take say fifty [lives] . . . exacting not an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but as many eyes and teeth as we can possibly get . . ." On 14 January 1865, four days after he had become Bowen's mayor, Wills went on "a dispersing expedition" along with "a few squatters and their friends" after Aborigines had speared a shepherd at Walter Scott's Valley of Lagoons station. "We turned out and ran them to earth," Wills wrote:

> they got on the top of a big mound . . . and smacked their buttocks at us and hurled large stones . . . and hid themselves behind . . . huge rocks but some of them paid dearly for their bravado. They had no idea that we could reach them to a dead certainty at the distance of a mile by our little patent breech-loading 'Terrys' . . . some of them jumped I am sure six feet in the air.

During this mayhem, Wills decided to "select . . . a little girl with the intention of civilizing and one of my friends thought he would select a boy". In the process, Wills was assailed by a woman whom he presumed to be the 'mother' and received a desperate blow from her 'nulla'. Wills' unnamed 'friend', who he claimed was "a kidnapper to the hilt", had since "been connected with the Government of the Colony and . . . held the high office of Chief Emigration Commissioner and Protector of the Blacks".

Not satisfied with stealing the child Wills, whose original trade was that of 'pork butcher', dissected one of the Aboriginal corpses "to get a few specimens of certain *limbs* and *head* of a Blackfellow which was not a very delicate operation I can tell you". With all his friends watching, Wills began "to anatomize":

> I went to work business-like to take off the head first and then the arms and then the legs and gathered them together and put them into my pack saddle and one of my friends who I am sure had dispersed more than any other Man in the Colony made the remark that if he was offered a fortune he could not do what I had done. [H]is name was Peter Armstrong, a well known pioneer in the North of Queensland.

The next day, Wills stripped the limbs of their flesh beside one of the lagoons, as his companions fished and bathed nearby. At dusk, he gave up "the unholy job", and all returned to the station "for supper and yarns and pipes and nightcaps of *whiskey*, before turning in". Here, Wills was seized by excruciating stomach pains and thought he would die. "I believe it was a perfect shock to my system by doing such a horrible repulsive thing . . ." he observed, but

> I was not going to be done out of my specimens of humanity, and I packed them home to Bowen as well as my little protegee [sic] of a girl . . . who rode on the front of my saddle for over eighty miles and crying nearly all the way.

In this grisly account, again, we have no precise numbers of those massacred. Yet, more significant is the tone of normalcy that pervades the retelling. Wills dissected the Aboriginal body with the same matter-of-factness as Jack Watson and Frank Hann employed some twenty years later when they nailed eighty Aboriginal ears to the outer walls of their Lawn Hill homestead, south of Burketown, after reprisals for cattle-killing. Emily Caroline Creaghe, travelling with Favenc's exploring party in 1883 would record that sight with the same equanimity as the Bowen citizenry displayed as they watched their mayor riding into town with human bones protruding from his saddle-packs and a weeping, stolen child before him on his horse:

> as I neared the town . . . I met different people who hailed me with how do you do and so on and where did you get that intelegent [sic] little nigger from . . .

Some time later, Wills exhibited his 'trophies' at a bazaar organized to raise funds for the Bowen Hospital. Because of the "disgust of many", especially "the Ladies [who] might get a shock", Wills was impelled to cover the skull and other bones

> with a flag, the Union Jack, and if anyone wished to see what was under that flag they had to ask the favor of one of the committee . . . that bazaar . . .

> was a grand success in a monetary point of view . . . we had some grand gatherings at times for the benefit of all such institutions so requiring help . . .[51]

In this arresting scene, completely devoid of irony, but as confronting as a Gordon Bennett painting, Wills assembled these symbols and spoils of Empire as ingenuously as a child would play with toys. This tableau seems an apt metaphor for framing any further debate that arises from *Quadrant*'s intervention and our response to it. Where Windschuttle and others prefer to see an unsullied Union Jack proudly flying over the Australian continent, we are compelled to examine the realities of what it hides. And what we discern is a chilling glimpse of Nietzsche's 'festival of cruelty'.[52] Even in Wills' bleak account there remains an undertone of the 'whispering in our hearts' of a civilized ethical self – the butcher's stomach cramps, the Bowen ladies' 'shock' – but the overwhelming sense is that of abomination rendered commonplace.

It is intensely discomforting to conceive of an Australian social order where the mass murder of certain people, identifiable by their ethnicity, was a way of life, executed by a minority of perpetrators, tolerated by the settler majority, and winked at by a state which, in other settings, upheld the precepts of British culture, law and justice.

Cases of Indigenocide?

Windschuttle and *Quadrant* reject the idea that genocide happened in Australia. In this, they are part of several vocal and influential 'genocidal denial' groups. These affronted conservative critics assert, rather than demonstrate, that genocide never happened and have little to say about its definition.[53]

However, there needs to be a 'revised definition of genocide' that is consonant with the facts of Australian history. Paul Bartrop has observed that "death owing to frontier violence has a certain air of deliberation and intent accompanying it" and asks "but was it genocide?" Bartrop prefers terms like "genocidal destruction" and argues that each situation on the frontier must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. He also points out that most of those who have used it in the Australian context have not pursued "the deeper theoretical dimensions implicit in the concept".[54] Indeed, relatively few analyses of Australia's past either by Indigenous or non-Indigenous authors, apart from Colin Tatz's article and Alison Palmer's recently published *Colonial Genocide*, have examined the concept at any length, either in its 'theoretical dimensions' or its empirical applications.

This in turn raises other, and possibly more difficult, problems of definition and interpretation – including whether defining (and redefining) genocide (and related terms like 'ethnocide') are counter-productive, and possibly 'futile', reifications. Whether we accept or reject these latter points depends on whether one accepts or rejects genocide as a peculiarly 'modern' phenomenon – with the Jewish Holocaust (1933–1945) as exemplar. This seemingly unprecedented mass extermination influenced the Polish-Jewish intellectual, Raphael Lemkin, to devise the first major attempt in 1944 to define genocide, one which the United Nations adapted, applied and updated after the Second World War.[55]

If we accept this reasoning then we can apply the United Nations Convention on Genocide to what happened to Australia's Indigenous people from 1933 but not before. Chronologically this would include some twentieth-century Australian state assimilation practices but relatively few massacres, as the vast majority of these occurred earlier.

On the other hand, a number of genocide scholars and educators, Jewish and non-Jewish, have pointed out that genocide is 'nothing new', even if the term is.[56] To anticipate our argument, we suggest that it is possible to demonstrate, first, that certain elements of the United Nations Convention on Genocide fit the Australian Aboriginal situation under British imperialism and Australian colonialism; and secondly that it is appropriate (and even preferable) to have another, related term which fits Australian empirical realities

rather better, namely 'indigenocide'. The latter, in brief, refers to those actors (governments, military forces, economic enterprises or their agents, private individuals etc.) who carry out destructive actions, policies and practices on Indigenous/Aboriginal individuals, families and groups *mainly because of their perceived indigeneity or 'Aboriginality'*.

Genocide derives from the Latin words *genus*, meaning a 'group', and *caedere* meaning 'to kill'. The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states that:

> Genocide . . . is the committing of certain acts with intent to destroy – wholly or in part – a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such. What are the acts? First, actual killing. But it is possible to destroy a group of human beings without direct physical extermination. So the Convention includes . . . the acts of causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberate infliction of conditions of life 'calculated to bring about' physical destruction; imposing measures to prevent birth; and, finally, forcibly transferring children of one group to another group . . . In accordance with the Convention, related acts are also punishable: conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, an attempt to commit the crime, and complicity in its commission.[57]

The Tasmanian Aboriginal situation is often regarded as Australia's singular genocidal example. Was this the case however? It is certainly genocidal if one takes the United Nations Convention's definition, and deploys several of its criteria to what occurred during the height of the conflict between the settlers and the Aborigines over land (1824–1834). The most important rationale for the 'Black War' was that the pastoral settler-invaders and their mainly convict servants intended to displace Aborigines and replace them with sheep. The Aborigines, with some exceptions, did not accommodate themselves to this state of affairs and opposed the settler-invaders with quite effective and damaging resistance campaigns. Responding to settler-invader pressure and Aboriginal successes, Governor Arthur declared martial law in 1828 as a prelude to an "organized manhunt" of some 2000 men (including about 500 troops and 700 convicts) – the 'Black Line' of 1830 which sought to clear the settled districts of Aborigines. These events constituted what Landau calls "developmental genocide", that is, the "aim of eliminating an indigenous population, usually outside of the political structure, which is deemed to stand in the way of colonization, settlement or development". Secondly, especially with Arthur's actions, there was deliberate intent by the state directed at a collectively defined group designed to ensure their elimination from the landscape and to confine those who survived to marginal areas and to one major site, Flinders Island.[58]

Thirdly, the United Nations Convention is clear that the 'intent to destroy' any group of people does not have to be total. Some Australians and other analysts have assumed, incorrectly, that the Aborigines (estimated to be about 5–7000 originally) 'died out' in 1876 with Truganini, the 'last Tasmanian'. In fact, Bass Strait Islander communities who were descendants of Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal sealers and whalers had avoided much of the land war and provided a base for the present-day diaspora population numbering some 12,000 people, according to the 1996 Australian Census.

Fourthly, 'actual killing' occurred of at least eight hundred Tasmanian Aboriginal people largely through the settler-invader 'roving parties'.[59] So this fits the definition. There is also the psychological or traumatic effects of so much killing on those who escaped from imminent death. However the United Nations Convention also states that "it is possible to destroy a group of human beings without direct physical extermination" and specifies the deliberate imposing of "conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction".[60] Here the *type* of colonization that occurred, both in Tasmania and throughout much of mainland Australia from the 1830s to the 1890s, i.e. geographic imperialism with pastoralism as its core, was the *fundamental* reason why Aboriginal 'conditions of life' changed so radically, leading to their direct 'physical destruction'.

But what about the rest of Australia? We have already mentioned the geographic imperialism concomitant with pastoral production, mining and agriculture. In this respect, as Lyndall Ryan has argued, it was Tasmania repeated but on a much larger scale.[61] We have also demonstrated more examples of extermination in colonial Queensland, where an Aboriginal mounted infantry (the Native Police) added another lethal ingredient to the general deracination. In any event, the taking of Aboriginal children from kin (or sometimes with kin) to non-Aboriginal families, institutions, homes, reserves and employers – an Australia-wide phenomenon that began in the nineteenth century and lasted well into the 1960s (as Anna

Haebich's *Broken Circles* has shown graphically) – exactly conforms to another United Nations Convention on Genocide criterion, that is, "forcibly transferring children from one group to another group".

Genocide denialists and also a few more temperate and thorough scholars nevertheless query "the vexed question of intention" in the "unplanned process of colonization" in Australia.[62] Arguably, in both Tasmania and Queensland, it is easier to demonstrate 'genocidal intent' because Aboriginal resistance was possibly more ubiquitous and dangerous in those places than in other parts of Australia, and thus required a more clear-cut, intentional response from settler-invaders and the state.

This dubious proposition of unplanned colonization rests on Sir John Seeley's oft-quoted observation, or rather fantasy, that Britain "never really had an empire"; "that conquest had played no part in the accretion of territories"; and that British colonization had occurred "in a fit absence of mind".[63] On the contrary, by 1760 and certainly by the time Governor Phillip arrived on Eo-ra land in 1788, "colossal wealth" was pouring into Britain "from the colonial tribute of empire that now eclipsed all others".[64] Planting a convict colony at Sydney Cove, and following this up with a smaller, convict-based outlier in Hobart from 1803 underscored British hegemony over France in the south-west Pacific. Still influenced by mercantilist economic principles, British naval and state power backed the East India Company's commercial presence, while the exile of convicts to Australia revived Britain's colonial policy of transportation that the American War of Independence curtailed. Belated as it was, the British state's decision in 1786 to establish a penal-colonial outpost at 'Botany Bay' was still a *decision* i.e. an *intention*, and one made at the highest government levels.[65]

Once established, political, commercial and material realities ensured that the new British colony would eventually outgrow its penological rationale. Until the 1820s, the main economic preoccupation of the colonists was to have enough food to survive.[66] Trade, commerce and imports met some of this need, but future self-sufficiency, let alone commodities for export, required agricultural and grazing enterprises that could only be obtained by expropriating Aboriginal land and water supplies. In any event, the felons sent to Australia were expected to fend for themselves when their sentences expired which meant that they had to become independent producers or proletarians. That is, they were compelled to compete with each other and with the Indigenes for their livelihood. This state of affairs lay at the heart of the Hawkesbury War, noted earlier. Colonial Office instructions to successive New South Wales governors from 1787 until the 1820s (and to Aboriginal protectors in South Australia in the 1830s) recognized the Aboriginal presence but contained a fundamental contradiction: a stated *intention* to "conciliate" Aboriginal "affections" and "live in amity and kindness with them"[67], together with the *intention*, indeed the *necessity*, to take their land.

Thus Britain's expansion into Australia, its adjacent islands and seas was a calculated and deliberate series of complex moves, that many people made – from Secretaries of State for the Colonies in Britain, to governors, merchants, 'officer-farmers', squatters, explorers, surveyors, farmers, politicians, miners, journalists, Native Police commandants, entrepreneurs, capitalists, missionaries, ex-convict farmers and shepherds, and numerous others. It was anything but the heedless osmosis of territories that Seeley suggested or the benign process of 'assimilation' that Windschuttle defends. Viewed in this light, it may be pedantic to insist on distinctions between the criteria for genocide and the criteria for imperialism and colonialism, given that, in comparing the American and Australian examples, the death rate of Indigenous peoples on both continents as a result of European invasion and conquest was well over 90 per cent[68] – an appalling statistic that prompted David Stannard to call his history of colonial conquest *American Holocaust*. And to return to the United Nations Convention on Genocide, the introduction of diseases (whether deliberate or otherwise) *was* a bigger killer of Aboriginal people than outright violence (Windschuttle is right for once on this point though the issue of intentionality invites debate), and made it possible 'to destroy a group of human beings without direct physical extermination'.

Much of the documentation that Windschuttle deploys to disparage *his* selection of missionaries', journalists' and historians' accounts is not 'first-hand' or 'proximate' at all . . . The closest he gets to 'direct evidence' is Lancelot Threlkeld's edited letters and papers – which he then dismisses as "third-hand reports".

So, FINALLY, where does all this leave us with the questions, Was it genocide? and, did it constitute an Australian Holocaust? Our answer to the first question is a fairly resounding 'Yes'; to the second question a cautious 'No'. We discuss our reasons for these answers next and propose that a form of 'developmental genocide', namely 'indigenocide', is a concept that comes closer to accounting for the Australian settler colonizing process.

If one adopts the United Nations Convention (and no other) then the imperial takeover of Aboriginal Australia was genocidal. One of the main differences between the Jewish Holocaust and Australia's 'killing fields' however was that the destruction of Aboriginal life was mainly a private, i.e. settler-invader led, ideologically defended, piecemeal series of events whereas the Nazi government's 'Final Solution' was a concerted, bureaucratic, industrial, highly concentrated, state-directed ideological program of mass annihilation with Jews as the main victims. Crucially, the Australian colonial state, except in Tasmania and Queensland (the latter with the Native Police), was not the main perpetrator or initiator of genocide; and even in these instances declarations of martial law, and Native Police punitive sorties were possibly secondary to privately organized vigilantism and raiding parties, or individual rampages (e.g. William Fraser) against Aborigines. Rarely did the colonial state intervene on behalf of these 'British subjects'. As for the British imperial government, it was too far away from events in the colonies to prevent the mayhem on the frontiers that the Colonial Office became so alarmed about during the 1830s and 1840s. This apparent lack of interest, however, does not diminish such actions from being genocidal, for indifference to and/or complicity with genocide still falls within the United Nations Convention.

Nevertheless, we would be reluctant to characterize what we have explored here as an 'Australian Holocaust'. The modern concept of 'genocide', and the Hebrew word, *ha-shoah* (the Holocaust) to describe it were invented precisely to account for what was a probably unique manifestation of the quite ancient practice of genocide. To put it another way, this genocide (i.e. the Holocaust) could not run ahead of its time and thus 'belongs' to a particular epoch in human history, i.e. the rise and fall of German fascism (i.e. Nazism). Thus we can apply this 'modern' definition both to the 1933–1945 period itself, and to policies of forced assimilation in Australia *at that time*. This, as we have pointed out before, does not rule out using the term 'genocide' more widely. But it does run the risk of what Steven Katz calls "offensive moral chauvinism" by diminishing or conflating the Jewish experience, as well as being a-historical.[69]

'Indigenocide' is a means of analysing those circumstances where one, or more peoples, usually immigrants, deliberately set out to supplant a group or groups of other people whom as far as we know, represent the Indigenous, or Aboriginal peoples of the country that the immigrants usurp. This immediately excludes some British and European imperialisms, e.g. in colonial India, and in most of the African colonies. One exception, in the African case, was 'colonial genocide' – the German occupation of Herero lands in south-west Africa.[70] The point is that imperialism and colonialism do not simply equate with genocide, destructive of Indigenous lives as they may be.

Australia was very different however. It was first of all a settler-invader British colony whose 'invaders', whether convicted or otherwise in the first instance, with few exceptions, stayed on. A certain proportion of the colonial elite (the squatters) were temporary sojourners, but most remained to found dynasties in Australia, while other middle-class and working-class immigrants came to the colony to 'improve' themselves. Crucially, the immigrants kept coming and by the 1850s if not earlier, exceeded the Aboriginal population in size.

Secondly, as examined above, wealth creation in the colonial period relied on finding export staples that competed successfully on the world market. Britain's pre-eminence in manufactures and shipping ensured that Australia's political economy be based on raw materials with Britain as chief market; and once these raw materials shifted to land-based commodities (domestic livestock, minerals and grains) it opened up huge tracts of territory, putting pressure on its Indigenous owners. The latter were sometimes absorbed into the colonial economy as colonized labour (often after being captured at the point of death); and from the 1840s provided the core workforce on many remote pastoral holdings.[71] But mostly they were dispossessed in the ways we have described. In short, for the colonials, Aboriginal land was a more valuable asset than Aboriginal labour.

Because of these reasons, and because Aborigines resisted these successive invasions; or, alternately, refused to adapt to alien cultural norms; or finally, looked as if they would not survive as a people, they became the targets of a plethora of degrading epithets: 'savages', 'vermin', 'superstitious

barbarians', 'nomads', 'heathens', 'intelligent monkeys', in the 'lowest state of existence', 'cannibals', 'wild animals' that 'deserved to be shot', and 'poor creatures' who needed 'protection'. Most of these stereotypes were made because settler-invaders, the politicians and the press which supported them believed fervently that Aborigines stood in the way of colonial progress; and, as such, should be cleared from the landscape as a matter of duty to a 'higher' and more 'advanced' civilization.[72] Here 'developmental genocide' was in operation, and probably 'ideological genocide' as well.

While peoples other than Aborigines attract pejorative or racist invective, Aboriginality (or perceived qualities of Aboriginality) is the defining feature here. This means that those doing the defining, especially in a colonial situation, construct typologies or hierarchies of race that almost always place Aborigines at the very bottom of the human scale and, in extreme cases, deny their humanity altogether. Invariably the invading and defining group, irrespective of class, regards itself as inherently superior to the Indigenes and constructs its own differences as normative and hegemonic. Incoming migrants who become part of settler-invader society place themselves in relation to the Indigenes, or are placed by the hegemonic group, into the racial hierarchy. But almost always again, the Indigenous group as a whole remains at the bottom.

In this respect, the society takes on more of a caste-like quality than a class one, or rather *caste relations apply mainly to Aborigines or Indigenes while class relations apply mainly to the dominant ethnic groups.* In other words, dominant-group exclusionary pressures are directed most consistently against Aboriginal people, as demonstrated by the numerous proscriptive and classificatory laws for Aborigines *as a group*, which began in Australia in the nineteenth century. Two examples were the 1897 Queensland *Aborigines Protection Act* and the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board of 1883, both of which systematically removed thousands of Aboriginal adults and children. The important point here is that the dominant groups, and particularly those who control the state apparatus, deny social mobility most of all to Indigenous people.

It could be argued that at least some of these criteria apply to other non-dominant ethnic groups, especially under colonialism. Plenty of cases can be cited in Australia of racial exclusion, not least the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901, the first piece of federal legislation passed by the new Australian commonwealth. Exclusion, segregation and other forms of social closure and worse have been, and are, daily visited upon all sorts of people – many of whom are White – for example, homosexuals, the 'intellectually handicapped' and so on. While this is so, 'indigenocide' has a number of other vital ingredients that set it apart from the racisms, the oppressions, and the exterminations of most other genocides or ethnocides.

First, as pointed out before, indigenocide usually occurs when an invading group *intentionally* invades and colonizes another group or groups who are the 'first peoples' of that region, or who have proof of such origins. Even though *terra nullius* was assumed, the first British and European navigators to observe Aborigines (e.g. Dampier, Cook, La Perouse etc.) proved that people occupied Australian soil. Secondly, the invaders must conquer the Indigenes and maintain their advantages over them as long as is necessary or possible. Thirdly, as conquerors, the invaders must kill sufficient numbers of Indigenes, or render their ways of sustaining meaningful life so difficult that they come close to extinction and may disappear altogether. (This characteristic, as we noted above, distinguishes indigenocide from other forms of colonialism such as British rule in India.) Fourthly, and this reinforces the actively *genocidal* aspects, the invaders must classify the indigenes as 'the lowest form of humanity', rather like Eichmann classified the Jews as a 'garbage nation', who deserve to be exterminated.[73] Fifthly, indigenocide, notably with Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians, involves destroying, or attempting to destroy, Indigenous religious systems and imposing binaries between the material and spiritual realms. Above all, indigenocide implies in theory and practice that Indigenous people are *less valued* than the land they inhabit and which the invaders desire.

AT LEAST ONE SECTION of Australian thought remains stuck in the 'myth of peaceful settlement'. In Windschuttle's scenario, the Australian historical world turns upside down. British fair-play and justice patrol the frontiers rather than expediency, licence and mayhem; indiscriminate violence is the least of problems there rather than the most daunting. It is the conscience-stricken, contemporary White 'whistle-blowers', who are cast as the liars instead of those who create, perpetuate, condone or hide such misdeeds. And it is Indigenous cultures that suffer from an ongoing 'faulty memory syn-

drome' rather than a society of land-inheritors, still frozen in denial or forgetting.

There is little that is new in these intellectuals' arguments and justifications, which rest on assumptions about Australian exceptionalism, the inherent superiority of Western materialism, and on an indignant insistence that Indigenous Australians subsume themselves within it. This outlook echoes the 'developmental genocide' mentality that deranged Indigenous Australian lives for such a long time and which bedevils them still; and it appears that Windschuttle and some other *Quadrant* contributors, like their colonial predecessors, value the oldest continent and its economic resources more highly than the oldest civilization and its human resources. In the process, they have given us an expurgated version of history and recast it as truth. The historical problem we face is not how some historians, journalists and missionaries may have exaggerated a small quotient of colonial disorder. Rather we face the history of attempts to liquidate that 'oldest civilization' which, nevertheless, has survived indigenocide; and the accompanying attempts to hide the story of that massive tragedy.

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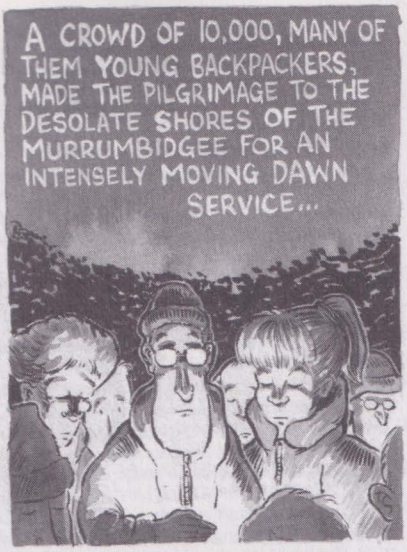
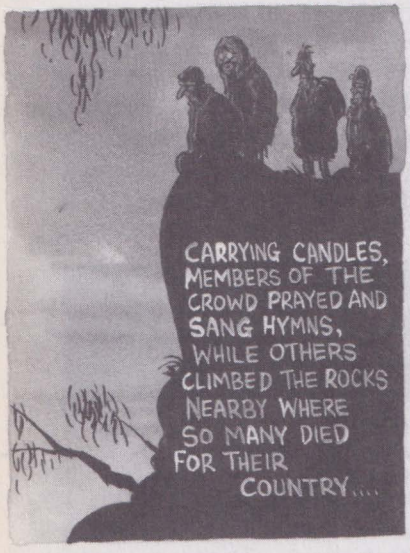
LEST WE FORGET
A NATION HONOURS ITS WAR DEAD


AUSTRALIANS HAVE MARKED THE ANNIVERSARY OF ANZAC DAY WITH LARGE DISPLAYS OF SOLIDARITY AS THEY PASSED THE SPIRIT OF MYALL CREEK TO A NEW GENERATION...

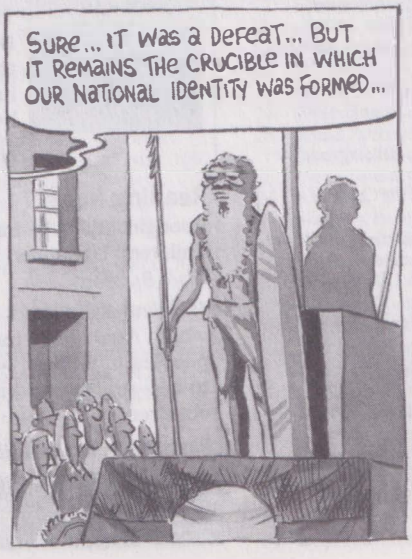

A CROWD OF 10,000, MANY OF THEM YOUNG BACKPACKERS, MADE THE PILGRIMAGE TO THE DESOLATE SHORES OF THE MURRUMBIDGEE FOR AN INTENSELY MOVING DAWN SERVICE...


CARRYING CANDLES, MEMBERS OF THE CROWD PRAYED AND SANG HYMNS, WHILE OTHERS CLIMBED THE ROCKS NEARBY WHERE SO MANY DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY....


AT CHRISTMAS CREEK, IT WAS AN EMOTIONAL PRIME MINISTER WHO LAID A WREATH TO COMMEMORATE THE THOUSANDS OF FIRST AUSTRALIANS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE FRONTIER WARS...


IN EAST TIMOR, THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL USED THE SPECIAL ANZAC DAY SERVICE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF THE KALKADOONS...


HAYLEY ASHFIELD, 23, OF MELBOURNE, ATTENDED THE DAWN VIGIL AT GLEN ORMISTON...
THEIR SACRIFICE MADE POSSIBLE ALL THE THINGS WE NOW TAKE FOR GRANTED....

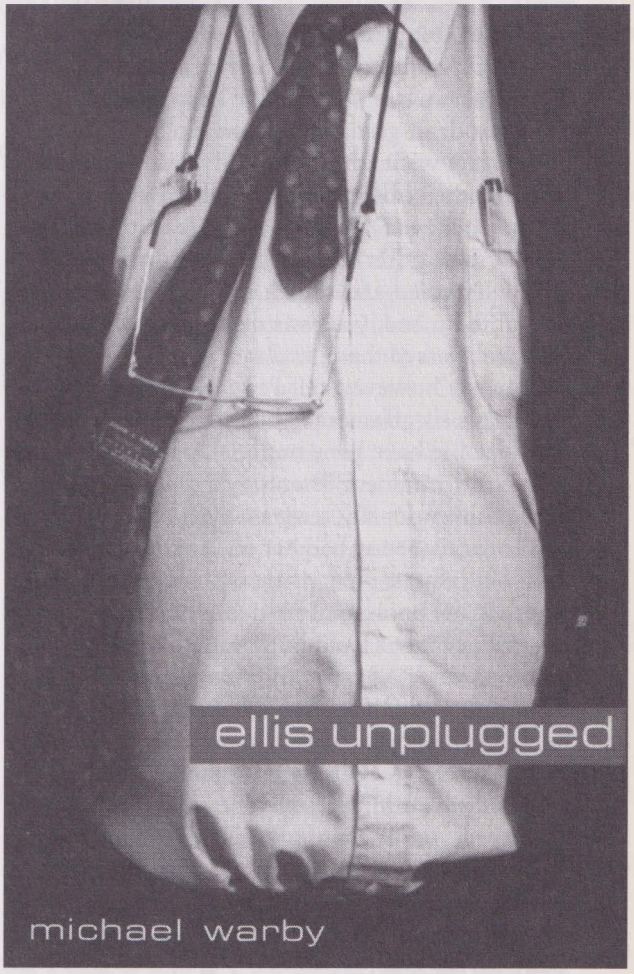

SURE... IT WAS A DEFEAT... BUT IT REMAINS THE CRUCIBLE IN WHICH OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY WAS FORMED...


THE VETERANS OF THOSE PAST WARS MAY NO LONGER BE WITH US, BUT THE MEMORY OF THEIR SACRIFICE WOULD APPEAR TO BE IN SAFE HANDS

Bob Ellis

Warby Plugged

Tuesday 24 April 2001



MICHAEL WARBY'S *Ellis Unplugged* arrived in the mailbox last Wednesday, to my surprise. On its cover is a photograph of my stomach, tie and spectacles, untidily composed. In its pages is a loud priapic motiveless monster who shares some of my history but not all that much – like the twenty-two years I helped raise three children or my thirty years as a film reviewer or my other, briefer lives as a stand-up comedian, jobbing actor, railway worker, factory worker, proofreader's copyholder, advertising copywriter, college tutor, series writer, mob orator, songwriter, an absorbed explorer of the West of Ireland, a self-effacing householder in tweedy, conservative Wahroonga, a witness of the 1968 US election, a youthful frequenter of Prime Minister Whitlam's parliamentary office, a lifelong infester of arts committees and Playwrights' Conferences, a Scrabble fiend, a handy slips fielder, a pool shark, a chess incompetent, a daily walker of dogs in twilit waterside Peninsula parks, a feeder of parrots on our front verandah. There is none of that.

And there are (sigh) over two hundred errors of fact, omission and extrapolation in its 215 pages. The following, if it matters, are a few of them.

I was born in Murwillumbah, not Lismore. My father's paternal forebears were Scots, not Welsh, and he like them was a coalminer – though Warby strangely says he wasn't. My eyes are not "extremely blue" but dull swamp-green. My father's eyes were not pale blue but brown. I was not born "two days before Paul McCartney", that is on 16 June, 1942, but five weeks before that, on 10 May. My mother was not a lifelong "Adventist deacon" but for six months a temporary deaconess. Adventism does not now, and did not then, call sinful the picking of flowers on Saturday. It encourages the practice. Tongan Presbyterianism, a rather different sect, forbids it. My wife Annie did not marry at age thirty-four in "a white wedding" but more tactfully in pale yellow. I am not five feet seven but five feet nine and a quarter. Had Warby not refused to meet me, he might have got this right.

I am not, I think, as alleged on page 42, an "illiterate racist". I cannot see how, as is everywhere alleged in the book, I can be a sloppily dressed narcissist. Narcissism is one thing, sloppiness another; sloppiness a measure of one's self-disdain, narcissism surely of one's preening self-love. Narcissism wears silk shirts and Armani suits and perfume and chest-hair jewellery. Nor am I, as the book repeatedly calls me, a "lifelong fantasist". Fantasists have big dreams. They tell big lies. Those stories of mine that a few people have contested are actually pretty dull – premarital sex by student politicians, forty minutes at war during a mortar gunner's lunch break, a midnight quarrel between Faulkner and Richo. A fantasist would

boast of greater events, in mightier company. He would not spin small sagas of mediocre lust and battlefront cowardice. It would seem too much like life.

I did not in late October 1962 commune for days with my dead grandmother on Collaroy Beach, a place I first went to in 1995 to eat Mexican food. I was an atheist by 1962, and my Adventist grandmother believed the dead stay dead till the Last Trump. Like other students in those war-darkened weeks I studied and sat for exams and, yes, failed two of them and, yes, was displeased when Penny McNicoll passed them, and said so.

I didn't, however, tell Penny McNicoll that we must have six affairs each before marrying, or I certainly would have gone out briskly in search of one before the imminent ceremony. I didn't. I was tediously, conventionally, territorially, frantically in love, and engaged. Penny had her one encounter, though, with her famous phlegmatic train conductor, as reported in her book, and it ended everything between us – with a blow, a walk-out, a month or so of harassment, an arrest, a court order, a script, a movie, a book, this book, this essay, and so, thirty-eight years on, it goes. Penny's recurrent nightmares of me stalking her must have eased off by the 1980s when she sat beside me during four Sydney Film Festivals and afterwards, while chatting over coffee and lunching with me twice and refusing to kiss me once (I never tried again) revivified for a fond foreshortened Indian summer a tranquil, uncomplex friendship that sadly did not last.

I was not paid $50,000 by Lord Puttnam for *The Nostradamus Kid,* but $5000. We bought our Palm Beach house not for $75,000 but $57,000. Wendy Hughes's first name is not Helen but Wendy. The producer of *Bliss* is Tony Buckley not Vincent Buckley who is a dead poet from Melbourne. Chris Haywood is not Chris Hayward. Stephen Ramsey is not Stephen Ramsay. Lord Puttnam is not Lord Putnam or Lord Putman. David Elfick is not David Eflick. Mark Egerton is not Mark Edgerton. Joyce Carol Oates's novel is *Blonde,* not *Blondie*. Chaunce Rubie is Chaunce, not Chauncie. My book *First Abolish the Customer* is not called *First Abolish the Consumer*, a mistake he makes eight times though angrily claiming he read it very attentively. Kendall Hill is not also Kendall Hall, or vice versa. I was never quoted in the *Oxford Book of Quotations*. If I was "into total identification with the Brits" in 1974 I would not have come home within months to Australia and there bought a small theatre. My work is not, as he says on page 4, teeming with commercial travellers resembling my father: at my last count of these horny, drunken gremlins in my oeuvre there was one. I am not, I think, "incapable of human empathy", as anyone who has cried while reading my work – or laughed out loud – will attest.

Of the dozens of factual errors I'm supposed to have made, six (in thirty years) are actual ones – about Yami Lester, Helen Morse, David Spicer, an unplagiarized line in *Gallipoli*, and a confusion between Jesuits and Christian Brothers, and a quote I ghosted for John Pilger that he read and passed. The rest are differing versions of similar events by people embarrassed by what actually happened – a high school defloration, a seventies threesome, a political facedown, a play's rehearsals, a night of banter in Bowral – or afraid of the legal consequences. It's not hard to imagine Rodney Cavalier, a neighbour of Tanya Coleman and the political destroyer of her father, denying for all he was worth what he said. Not hard to imagine at all. If it was untrue that he'd said it, he would have rung me up and said so the minute he read it, on the first day of its publication. And he never has. We were business partners then and he would have.

I had nothing to do with Labor clubs and politics at Sydney University. The literary-and-theatrical crowd I ran with were flashily apolitical. I cursed with feeling the "earnest lefties" who took over *honi soit* on my tardy exit from it, and I cursed them in print. I did not seek the glamorous life of a war correspondent in Bangladesh, I happened to be there when war broke out and I was stuck there, with no planes out, and very, very scared.

Warby leaves out of his list of my writings two novels, seven plays, five miniseries, five soap operas, twenty-nine screenplays, eighty songs, maybe two thousand film columns, around eighty theatre reviews, maybe ten thousand entries in discontinuous diaries and notebooks (available in libraries but unconsulted by him), plus the two television documentaries I wrote with my Liberal friends Jim Killen and Kamahl, and the one on Aboriginal cricketers touring England, *Dreaming of Lords*, that may well show some hint that I'm not, or was not then, an "illiterate racist".

Nor was I ceaselessly touting left-wing theory in my dramas, as Warby says. In my (co-written) miniseries on the right-wing Lindsay brothers, a miniseries on the biggest case of the Liberal-voting Malcolm Turnbull, a musical on the Liberal-voting

Francis James, a film on the teen years of the Liberal-voting Don Bradman, a miniseries on the Darwin bombing, a film adaptation of a Joseph Conrad story, a bedroom farce, a science fiction thriller, two detective thrillers, a film about radio actors in the 1950s, a comedy about cricket, a thriller about cricket and a children's adventure film I showed no particular ideology. They are works, however, that have escaped the eagle unforgiving eye of Warby.

So too has my telemovie *Perhaps Love*, my series for Max Gillies, my jokes in *The Gillies Republic*, my planned film with John Clarke and Patrick Cook, my friendships with the Liberal-voting Peter Collins and Francis James, the Greens' Bob Brown and Jack Tilley, the Democrat Syd Hickman, the Communists Chris O'Sullivan, Harry Reade and Joyce Hawkins, the anarchist Paul Cox, the Tory Auberon Waugh, the Canadian social democrat John Ralston Saul, the militant English red ragger Howard Brenton, the anarchist Richard Neville, the Anglican organist Norman Kaye and Ken Welton, the Queensland pig farmer; not to mention my years of social cricket with David Hill, Alex Buzo, John Waters, Barry Oakley, Gary Reilly, and others less known. All of these things would have been told or shown him if he had met me, but he refused to.

It's not that kind of book, Duffy said.

Well, what kind of book is it? A furious extended pamphlet of almost unceasing defamation by the look of it (maddeningly, I never sue). It's a book about this poisonous narcissist fantasist harasser and woman-hater, drunken self-publicist and sinister manipulative Labor insider Ellis who can do no right, it seems. He always "barracks" for Labor except when he, say, bags Paul Keating's free marketeering or Bob Hawke's rude manners and so shows himself a Labor traitor, or he backs Brown not Bacon over the tall trees and shows his mind is confused. He always crazily, dimwittedly, fanatically rejects the boundless benefits offered by unshackled globalization though this, as we know, is the only way forward. He constantly, stupidly, sinisterly lies about Aboriginal children, who, as we know, were only "taken away to be educated" (strange how none got to university in fifty years and so many ended as unpaid domestic help). He is guilty *of course* of the ABC's inaccuracies in *The True Believers* though he himself in an article fussily pointed them out. A stickler in this case for historical fact he is elsewhere always universally, chaotically, lavishly loose with the truth. And mad. And vengeful. And powerful. And woman-hating.

> What a heady feeling to have such incompetent enemies. It almost gives one hope.

In a chapter called 'Women on Ellis' five females write of the beast. The two who haven't met him, Shelley and Cathy, call him, in turn, "a graceless, malicious, vindictive, hypocritical, gasbagging, bragging, unctuous, foulmouthed, self-indulgent, womanizing, lying bully" and a self-iconicizing bully and expensively corruptible pedlar of lies. Of the three who have met him, Susie, Penny and Alexandra, one calls him a magical commander of "the spell of words, the sheer innocent outlaw eroticism of them, of dreams being woven and stories being told. There's a seductive sorcery in words, and in the arts that give them life, and Ellis knows it", one agrees to marry him and one asks him to father her baby. Can there be a lesson here – that Ellis, when actually *met*, is not so hard to bear as you may at first, in your rancorous ignorance, have thought? I'm available for lunch with Cathy and Shelley, maybe even a threesome.

Warby says something quite appalling on page 166: that I wrote a letter urging Alexandra Long to abort her baby Juliet, thereby discarding my oft-aired views on foetal sanctity, when in fact, as Wayne Cooper grumbled to *The Daily Telegraph*, I talked her out of it with only thirty-six hours to spare. To say I called for the killing of a family member whose life I actually saved is a little rough, I would have thought, and a good few megatons more defamatory than saying wrongly Tanya Coleman had sex in the swinging seventies with a fellow student she went on dates with, and wrote an article hotly defending. I'm being called a potential killer here, of a life I actually saved.

Perhaps I will sue. Perhaps I can make a million dollars. Perhaps the prim Catholic Michael Duffy is a bit apprehensive now. No way, not Michael. He has an agenda, and he doesn't *mind* being sued, because that's how the game is played, I'm told. You keep your enemy busy, litigious, unsleeping and broke.

Warby tips his hand on page 1 when he complains of my "relentless name-dropping", a charge he often repeats, first citing how I said in a documentary film – and in perhaps three essays in thirty years – that I was, yes, at Sydney University with "Les Murray, Leo Schofield, Bruce Beresford, John Bell, Arthur Dignam, Robert Hughes, Mungo MacCallum, Richard Walsh, David Solomon, Peter Wilenski, Laurie Oakes, Clive

James, Germaine Greer, Michael Kirby, Geoffrey Robertson and Richard Wherrett". What in the hell was I supposed to do, conceal it? Or, like anyone would, remark on it? For Warby such notation of one's youthful acquaintance is a kind of mortal sin, for which one howls eternities in hell.

Duffy tips his hand too (who is funding this book and these port-addled Papist fatheads, the CIA? Or merely Rupert Murdoch? Whoever it is has a lot of loose change) by saying on the cover that my "hunger for publicity appears to know no bounds". This would account for why I live on a lonely hill far from the swirling metropolis, never go to opening nights or the fashionable restaurants, eat mostly alone in an untrendy Chinese restaurant reading English magazines, and after only five days of hellish national fame answered no further questions on Alexandra Long, refusing $25,000 from *Sixty Minutes* and $15,000 or thereabouts from *New Idea* for fresh adulterous revelations when I needed, and still need, that sort of money to pay bills. A publicity monger, sure. And a "toppling drunk" who drives home thirty miles through unavoidable beach road breathalyzers. Oh sure.

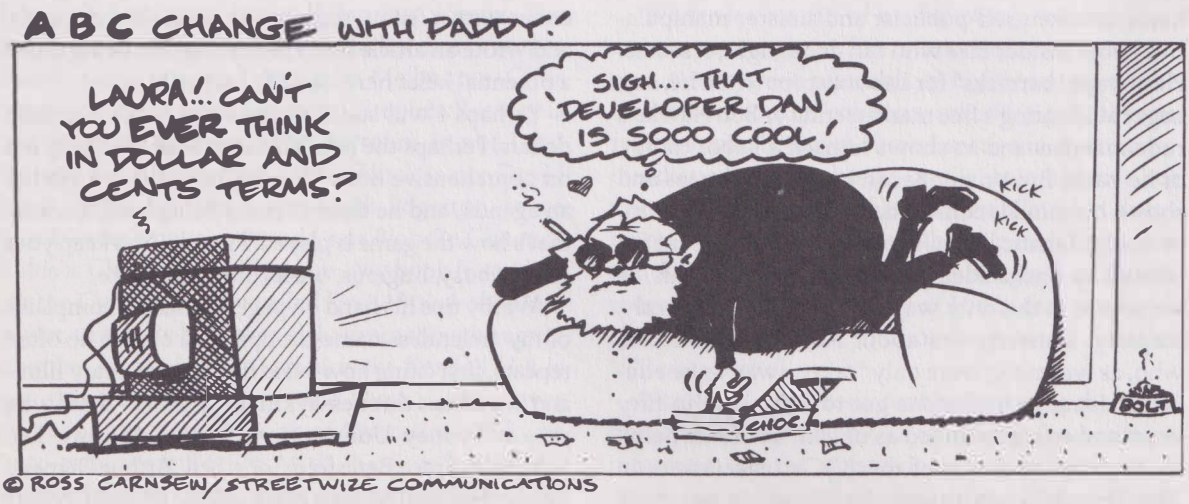
Missing from the book (as it must be of course, when its purpose is the portrait of a tottering foam-flecked clockwork monster) is any sense that I've lived for most of my time as many people do, raising and loving children, grieving when my house burned down, mourning the death of a sister, a father, an unborn child, sitting by the beds of dying friends, enjoying a good book, delighting in a good David Williamson play, a cricket match, a ferry ride, a sunset, a meal with my children, a motoring trip to Ireland, a day at the Sistine Chapel, a night a the Chauvel watching Charlie Chaplin or Jimmy Stewart. The Ellis portrayed is a mean salacious conspirator with evil men who are fervidly skulduggerously striving to bring back the exploded socialist abominations of public health and public education and government funding for literature, art and music. A vile beast with a shocking agenda who must be stopped, and all his demented iniquitous kind.

In a very odd postscript then Warby abandons the bear-baited Ellis Beast altogether, and in a sort of detachable manifesto says that it was a tragic mistake to pay Aborigines the same wages as whites. We should go back, he recommends, to pay rates linked to skin colour and racial and tribal origin. It may be a view that has merit, but it will find few supporters I think in the coming Beazley-Beattie-Bracks-Bacon-Rann-Carr-Gallop decade of the Progressive Ascendancy he so detests. But you never know.

The book is punchily written, and a fairly good read, if a bit relentless. Buy it if you want to. Its three hundred errors and faults of logic are on the *overland* website to help you in your decipherment, puzzlement, pondering and verdict.

What a heady feeling to have such incompetent enemies. It almost gives one hope.

Whatever Bob Ellis is it is unlikely that he resembles Michael Warby's version of him.



From Cold War to Flower Power

Angela Costi

HER NAME IS AGGELIKI. She's a woman of the 1950s. Even though she was born way before then and she's still alive today, it was the fifties when the big choice was made. Her family or her country? If she was a politician it would have been her country. But she had become a mother.

Some say it began with a *loyiasmo,* a promise of betrothal. He was the most beautiful man in the village, other girls would have jumped; "how could you refuse?" "No," I say to them, "it began before I grew breasts." My *Nouna,* Godmother, took me by the hand, behind her curtains, all hushed and silent, away from the frowns of the Church, and brewed me a strong black. "Made of Cypriot soil," she laughed. And as I drank, something inside me awoke, as if for the first time I too could look into my cup and consider the black stewed-up world.

Nouna cradled and turned the cup, sniffing and sighing until she was ready to tell. She saw me in another place. She called it the cold land, not because of no sun, there was plenty of that, but because politics and religion were fought with pens and paper. Ink was the only thing that bled. She said, "This will be your new home," pointing among the pile of black grains she called houses. "*Tha kleestees mesa steen monaxia sou.* You will fall inside yourself, in this new land."

I said, "I will not go". She pointed to a little space in the cup – a huddle of black curled worms – she named my future family. It was then she told me of my sons and how they would die with the Cyprus we knew, if we stayed, and would live but with an ache in their soul, if we left. Breeding death or unhappiness, what choice was that! I decided then, because I could at that early age, to never fall in love, to never hope for marriage. My *Nouna's* words soon became an awkward bruise that wouldn't completely fade away but could easily be ignored.

There were the bigger bruises of never enough money, never enough food, one too many daughters and who could afford their dowries. So I worked for my keep harvesting carob and apricots. And visiting once a week that special tree laden with fruit we couldn't eat. On every branch were tied white hankies, towels, scarves, pillow cases, even babies' christening gowns – prayer flags or flags of surrender, it didn't matter, they were all the white wishes for something better than was. I would look up into the tree and catch the sun kissing those wishes, take my scarf from my neck and hold it ready to place on the nearest naked branch but always stopped – what was it I wanted above all else . . . money? I wasn't starving . . . freedom? what would I do with it? . . . love? didn't I have family and friends? . . . the scarf always returned to my neck.

There was no urge for me to be married, my older sister was the concern. She worshipped a man she would never meet but would easily die for. Archbishop Makarios, the political prophet, gazing down on her from a large frame in our small bedroom. He was all sepia and solemn, she was quivery, fighting back tears, kneeling and praying for him, his invisible bride. I wanted her to be happy, so I decided to visit the tree with my scarf and wish for a Strong, Safe, Independent Cyprus.

I took off my scarf (for the final time, I thought) and looked up into the tree to find a free branch. There was something up there, it looked . . . I screamed. It jumped down, laughing. It was a . . . a man and if I had a broom, his head would have gone toppling. But then he smiled, teased me for a kiss and when I refused he ran, leaving me with the memory of his beauty which I folded into my scarf and placed around my neck.

This beautiful man and his mother soon came knocking on my door. And my "Yes" turned into a bed of surprise and agony. We were married fast because I was too fertile. Before my fourth was due, my beautiful man became restless with ambition. He was told there was work that made you wealthy on the other side of the world, where no heavy politics and guns lived. Soon enough he boarded the ship for Australia, leaving me pregnant with my fifth. That's when my dark years came. The awkward bruise found a comfortable resting spot in my bed. Each couple of years I would lose a child to Australia. First my husband sent for my eldest, then the second, until I was left with my youngest girl and an entire field to harvest. I longed for Australia, not for the milk and honey – I had my *haloumi* and the sweetness of carob – but for my family. Without them I had no life.

It was fourteen years later when I saw his beautiful face. His hair was now stiff, all the curls had been somehow straightened with sticky cream, and he smelt of foreign water, on his chin, around his neck. He wore singlets under his shirts. Sometimes he wore a hat which he would tilt over one eyebrow. It made him look unreachable like those silent men, moving across those large white screens. We lived in a flat in Richmond. It was cold. I wore *Nouna's* black cardigan, it became my second skin. The flat had no valley of grass, no community of elders sat on the front porch, no Church bell swung its melody through its brick walls and I was so very happy, we were together for the first time. My eldest son showed me how to open a can of meat, it came out square, and I would slice it thinly and fry it with cardboard eggs. I got used to cows' milk, and bees' honey, to lighting gas for cooking, waiting for my sons to hear the news and then tell me, toasting bread the pop-up way, cleaning an empty house. They would all leave in the morning but they always returned that night, without blood stains but some machine dirt, I always washed away.

IN THE 1960S Lena's teenage heart swelled when she saw Marcello Mastroianni in Fellini's La Dolca Vita. *She bought her first mini skirt and wore it without stockings. In the seventies, her hemline dropped with her spirits; Fellini would never make her a movie star and Whitlam was crushed by the Queen.*

When Marcello was about to kiss Anita Ekberg, I closed my eyes and placed his lips on mine. I left the cinema with the strange hope I would bump into him. I abandoned the coffee shop in Lonsdale Street for Tiamos in Lygon. My two cousins and I painted our nails on the tram away from our mothers' savage tongues. The Italian honey-boys offered us cigarettes and a good time. We only took the cigarettes. I puffed but never inhaled. They said: "You are the roses among the weeds, you are prettier than the Australian girls." But their eyes always trailed the skirts of the blondes. One of my cousins they said looked like Sophia Loren, the other like Elizabeth Taylor but with brown eyes. They said I resembled the Queen. I cried. They tried to appease me: "When she was a young woman not now." But all I could see was her button nose, her hair that never moved, her forced smiles . . .

I wanted so much to go to training school to become a nurse. But my mother said there was no money to send me and my father said no daughter of his was going to wipe the shit off men's arses, anyway my English was still broken back then. I got a job in a clothing factory, owned by two Italians. I wasn't a dressmaker so I escaped the machines that never stopped making noise and sewed up women's hands by mistake. They gave me the Quality Inspector's job which at first I was proud of until my neck

got twisted and they complained when I didn't reach the daily quota of 2500 garments. It was too much, too fast. I had to scan the clothes for flaws and staple labels on them at the same time. I got ten dollars a day if I met the quota. If I didn't, money was always deducted.

The factory was in Broadmeadows, next to the Ford factory where all the men worked. Nearly every day, I had to wait for my Sophia Loren cousin to return from a dark corner behind the locker rooms. She'd come back with her lipstick smudged and bra straps showing. I'd tidy her up while her man-friend emerged pushing back his James Dean fringe. James Dean always had some friends he was trying to push onto me. Two or three often circled me while Sophia and Jimmy were doing the dark deeds. I flashed the factory's sharpest scissors when the vultures got too close.

One day, Sophia came running out crying. I thought they had gone too far, she was no longer a virgin. Jimmy was dragged out by a man I had never seen before. This man was holding hard onto Jimmy's arm, "Tell her. Go, tell her," he was yelling, "say sorry, you good for nothing . . ." But Jimmy was looking at the ground. Sophia was sobbing into my shoulder. The angry man's eyes softened as he looked at me and Sophia, "I say sorry for this man," he pushed Jimmy's shoulder, "he is married to my sister and sometimes forgets his place."

Poor Sophia thought she was going to be Jimmy's bride.

NOW THAT I DIDN'T have to wait for my cousin, I got home early enough to go to English classes. They were free and the class was made up of all sorts of colours and races. By chance or fate, the angry man with the soft eyes was also a student. We began reading the newspaper to each other. His name, believe it or not was Marcello, but he didn't look like the movie star. It didn't matter.

Marcello also worked at the Ford factory. He hated the conditions there. They got penalized for lateness and were not allowed a tea or toilet break if they couldn't find a relief worker. A strike was being organized. He was one of the organizers. I started going to my union meetings at the factory, dragging along my cousin. We deserved better conditions, better pay, a nurse on the floor for all our injuries. Marcello and I shared many of the stronger cigarettes; as he talked I would inhale deeply and dream of walking up to my boss with my staplegun demanding he give me back all the money he had deducted from my pay. This dream would be the second revolution; the first was the strike at the Ford plant.

Whitlam was trying to shake multinational control of the factory but Ford would not answer to Australian laws. Something had to be done to show them we were not sheep anymore, we had been shorn enough, it was our say now, this was our time. This became our chant on the day of the strike, "It's our time, not your time, our pay not your pay. It's our time, not your time, our pay not your pay." But the suits in the high offices got their guards to close the gates, Marcello and the others rushed them, the gates did not budge, the rubbish skip was wheeled over, it had plenty of hard steel car parts in it, they were thrown at the top floor windows where the suits lived, every window on the top floor was smashed then the blue pigs on horses came and things got worse . . . two pigs grabbing a leg each, took Marcello away.

A week later, his face still carried the bruises and pain.

fiction

Bohemians

Wayne Macauley

DO I HAVE BOHEMIANS? Of course I have bohemians, Matt, but probably not in the quantities you require. The contract I've just signed with the real estate agent Donleavy has just about cleaned me out. Also, you seem to be under some misapprehension about the way they get used, so I'll quickly deal with that first.

The poetry readings and sidewalk art will not, through my agency anyway (and I am, so far as I know, the only agent with bohemians on his books at the moment), be possible. Their role is purely decorative, Matt, you must understand that; anything more would involve us in an entirely different set of negotiations. I make the point now (and perhaps a little too forcefully) because the agreement between the bohemians and myself has come about only after long and often tortuous discussions which have resulted in a complicated set of fees and conditions that unfortunately I just cannot tamper with. The most fundamental of these is that *they will not create art under the public gaze* unless an additional fee is paid. If you want real working artists then your costs, I'm afraid, are going to skyrocket. So I'll take the liberty of assuming that you are only interested in the bohemians in their purely decorative role.

I know your area well, I eat my lunch there often, and you have correctly identified a problem common to many inner-city areas at present where the majority of your ratepayers have moved there in the first place because of its reputation as some kind of 'bohemian village'. They have bought up all the bohemians' houses and taken over the bohemians' cafés, rates and rents have skyrocketed and the bohemians themselves have fled to the cheap outer suburbs, leaving their former territory to the invaders. But people pay for character and ambience, Matt, as you well know; strip away that and they'll soon start wondering what they're doing there sipping coffee at three dollars a shot in a street which only a few years ago they would not have even heard of. So of course you need bohemians, and of course the sooner the better.

You say you have a limited budget with which to work (I don't think I've ever met a Community Arts Officer whose budget wasn't 'limited') and obviously you need to get some bohemians on the ground as soon as possible. I have a small group on call – consisting of one writer (male), one painter (female) and two musicians (both male) – and could have them down there by the middle of the week. They'll sit in cafés mostly, and wander up and down the street – but my bohemians are pretty familiar with the routine now and you can leave most of the details to them. I need hardly remind you that the weekends will involve penalty rates.

As to the long term, well, quite frankly Matt, this presents us with an entirely different set of problems. Ideally, of course, what you want is for a group of bohemians to move back into the area and live there on a permanent basis. As things stand at present, this is virtually impossible. Even with the good money my own bohemians are making they could still not afford the kind of rents that are now being charged in your area. The only solution I can see – and I really am talking outside my brief here and to some extent against my own interests – would be some arrangement whereby the Council buys up any run-down accommodation remaining in the area (and granted, there's not much left) and offers it to genuine working artists and bohemians alike at a

manageable price. It's a radical solution, I know, and there are risks involved. Your new class of ratepayer may appreciate a little bohemian ambience but whether they want to live next door to one is another question entirely. But it's a risk you may have to take: the costs involved in hiring bohemians on an hourly basis will in the end prove prohibitive. (Donleavys for example are handling a new residential conversion not far from you and want some colour and movement down there over the weekend when they have their open inspections. I charge them fifty dollars per bohemian per hour, including my commission. But multiply that by the ten bohemians they've hired and with penalty rates plus per diems and travel costs from the outer suburbs it ends up costing Donleavys almost six thousand dollars a weekend! Of course, for an old friend, I might waive the commission.) So if I were you I'd start laying the groundwork with the Council now for a more farsighted approach. I've spoken to Simon at Tourism about this (you know him, I think; he was with ArtAct around the same time as us: Dead Dreams, do you remember?) and he is in agreement with me. From his, that is Tourism's, point of view the haemorrhaging of genuine artistic life from the city can only be a bad thing and the sooner it is staunched the better. Perhaps you should have a word with him and see if you can't come to some arrangement?

As for me, yes, things are going well; in the end the bohemians have proven to be a business risk worth taking. Katie's fine, still working hard; Molly will be four next month. Sometimes I wonder what on earth I'm doing, but I don't like to think about it too much.

Enclosed are photos and two copies of the contract – all standard, I assure you. Sign them both and return one to me, as soon as you get the chance. (The writer by the way – see photo – is a fine young poet. Reminds me a bit of you in the good old days gone by. Unfortunately since working for me he's not had much time for writing – but he has talent, I think.)

PS: Did you hear that Heather got the Ministry job?

FUCK

is	is
kuck	humanrightsuck
is	is
duck	postmodernismuck
is	is
muck	deriduck
is	is
suck	americuck
is	is
luck	pekingduck
is	is
puck	canaduck
is	is
cuck	multiculturuck
is	is
yuck	criticuck
is	is
zuck	prettyuck
is	is
wuck	dengxiaopinguck
is	is
tuck	mysmokepuffuck
is	is
huck	writuck
is	is
nuck	readuck
is	is
buck	moneyuck
is	is
guck	cooluck
is	is
polituck	jazzuck
is	is
artistuck	postcommunismuck
is	is
fictionuck	economicsanctionsuck
is	is
poetuck	beautifuck
is	is
democratuck	U C

Ouyang Yu

FROM ADOPTION PAPERS

I kicked her in the stomach, but I didn't use force. The victim's mother married her rapist before sentencing, attends weekly prayer services for him. *He was a good biology teacher: I'd put my daughter in his classroom even now.* At Angkor Wat, a boy sniffs glue *because I want to forget*, sells his body for more. On the News Hour website, the expert says *encore* for Angkor. Repetition is history's force, misheard history an anarchy of substitutions. *Encore* for Angkor, Watts for Wat, farce for force; anger's elegies abandoned like the killing fields. The man who played Dith Pran was murdered for his watch in California. *He didn't rape her; he was seduced*, the girl's mother says. There's a process deeper than interpretation, than critique: *these are poems about eros and lack, not simply about dysfunction.* Beneath those surfaces – rice fields, shimmering words – there is conflation, confusion, a sinkhole into which the accordionist falls, finds skulls to stare him in the face. The music saved him, but he almost died of it. Death sentences for sentimental tunes, the labor hard as a palate of stone. Did the little girl ask for candy or did she offer up her mouth to the man's penis? The chat room is now open and one wonders about the effects of *chat* on historical discourse, or the implied *chit* that suggests a debt is owed to talk. He tried to develop passport photos in the bathroom, but the chemicals failed to take. Tell us about your phrase *dark room* and what it means to *The Girl Collection.*

MAY 12, 2000

Misnomers, gaps, the idle facts that have no home (*that empty niche is for the Virgin Mary*, my friend said at the mosque). *I have a stepmother and stepfather, but they'll never meet.* Stevens thought it natural that we look for what reminds us of ourselves and, while he intended us to look to poetry, we lean toward the happy tyranny of familial same; *you look so much like your aunt – I see him in you both. Of course you're tired, you're pregnant*, I'm told, after months of paperwork and no nausea. As if the birth metaphor were all there is, re-productive model spiraling from the sole fact of parenthood. Disacknowledging loss and recuperation, proleptic absence of certain conversations between us. *We're family*, I say to my son whom I've never met. He is all jpeg image and no text, the ideal son because he has for me no substance. I write in prose because I'm a lyric poet.

MAY 15, 2000

He saw shadows at his feet every night and slept with a knife beneath his pillow; when the shadows came, he'd fight them off with the weapon. His brother gave him magazines to put over *holes in the floor.* Her character digs holes in her body; it's empowerment by self-mutilation, she argues, but we don't believe her. In *the age of mechanical reproduction* it becomes less possible to erase history, to forget *the unsubstantiated allegations* airbrushed in the flesh like Allen Iverson's tattoos. *Baseball is still a white man's sport*, Douglas writes, and I aver, knowing statistics to be the endless repetitions of similar actions, building up to break down. *Why did Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho?* This is not the 'fit' of *fit to be tied* or even *tried.* Not Hieronymo's madness again. *You're walking a fine line between revolution and repetition.* Just remember: RELIABILITY FIXES EVERYTHING.

MAY 16, 2000

Evasions of form, the block print that orders, if not chaos, then its web (spider thread stronger than steel) unwoven in striations of the after-thought or – done. He corrected the typo *break* (as in bicycle) by repeating it in the margin; the copyright read *United Sates of America*. The twins were a form that none could break. *It would take an awful lot of love to adopt the cleft lip and palate kids.* Where monstrousness is pre-form, not – fab, before the knife, the thread, the pulling together of what is cloven. My son's eyes are brown platters that do not break. *It's just a picture,* Bryant says, *not a baby.* But it is the form of our baby, his precise measurement on photographic paper, his after-birth mark. I keep my eye on the web.

MAY 22, 2000

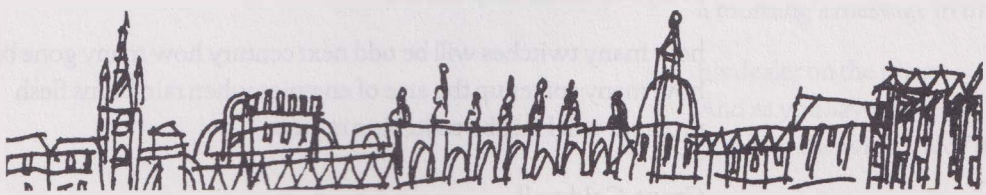
In middle age, high myopics sometimes develop tears in their retina. The doctor holds out an empty plastic eyeball for my inspection. *You don't teach Shakespeare, do you?* he asks. The transparent eyeball does not blink. If you seek to acquire too much spiritual knowledge in order to appease your ego, you are a materialist. The last photograph of my father shows him standing with his left arm around my mother, under a tree that is no longer there. There's irony in having a transcendental experience on a Common, even if it means the clearing away of boundaries. *Your life will change when you have a child,* she tells me. The puppy's brown eyes dance as a yellow radio plays Brahms.

MAY 24, 2000

The Rinpoche's papers scattered to the winds; he said this is good since written teachings spread farther than the sound of a voice. Still thinking this scattering a problem, I heard Lama say the Rinpoche had promised to return as a *tree*, the better to hold on to his leaves. But when Lama said he'd met *each* of them I knew he meant *three* reincarnations, a different kind of scattering. Lineages are not trees but translations through spiritual affinity, karmic cloning; who's to know that your neighbor's child is not your self? Dickinson's *shelf* imposes itself on my inner ear; the site of her family's house now an Exxon station, where essence is just another word for petrol, or for Ginsberg's gas, who knew something about transmission.

MAY 27, 2000

Susan M. Schultz



Jiri Tibor

Time-Sick

Your time-sick type A six-hour turnaround guy
six between leaving and coming back to work
there must be a thrill in it somewhere I guess
that many folders open on your desktop
and doing everything you do on the fly

hasn't got time to fiddle around with cress
and always buys his sandwiches anyway
he'll try and tell you there's no difference between
taking your time and wasting it but you know
fleeing central fear and chasing stress with stress

is completely different from letting stuff stream
over you like an exhaustible torrent
of appearances remembering you'll die
at some point later on when lots of problems
have solved themselves because time is on your team.

Chris Andrews

Zounds

If there was no such thing as wind and you heard the first one
trees talking like animals and children breaking zen like an egg
like the hard-boiled hormone-pumped west
sinking in the sun

love a word like suck or forever the kiss you're told is happiness
money in the bank congrats the spotlight chasing like a child like a
butterfly the family cut to pieces searching release finding torpor
chairs falling through space

the need for contact like irrational depression like the peripheral
spirit of the poem like the beloved is always immaculate like don't
look in mirrors tripping sugar and salt are drugs like rope and
everyone thinks they can see

how many twitches will be odd next century how many gone birds
how many spikes up the arse of enemies when rain burns flesh
progress will I still be twitching in step

Grant Caldwell

Skin

Never mind the fantasy about the tweezers and the tongue,
the one about the bicycle pump and the twisted rim.
Never mind the angle of penetration, or the number
of repetitions in the blessed series of withdrawals and
    givings-in.

Never mind the dream about the bean bag chair and the
    virgin,
the one about the tree and the bull terrier off its chain.
Never mind the song the words will not attach to,
the visions that arrive with the noises next door,

when a sneeze, or a sob, is mistaken for something else
and someone finds himself clinging to the wall,
perhaps with a glass to his ear, or his glasses on,
hoping something dark and old-fashioned has pulled him

from sleep this close to dawn. Never mind the crack
between the blinds and the sill, where a single moan
will keep him waiting an hour for another, his face pressed
against the pane, one eye open, half-blind but guided.

And never mind the woman in the grass beneath the
    statue.
Her palms are cupping her head, her skirt an inch off-
    centre,
glasses gleaming as the sun hums on the monument
of the general, the skin of her arms slowly going red.

Brian Henry

There but for the grace . . .

Surreptitiously almost
and with an addict's desperation,
dishevelled, as you'd half-expect,

he offers on the milling street
what once were known as
filthy pictures

but as you start to pull away
you see instead they're tiny texts
like papers for a cigarette

pecked out on some Remington
and sweated in a pocket.
Something's turned him right around.

He thinks it might turn you.
The voice is choppy with emotion,
intensities you would not wish,

and wearing still
the ones he fled:
a morning's message in the veins,

his dealer on the phone.
And as you say your firm "No thanks"
you hear the whispered "Jesus".

Geoff Page

Yuraygir, January 2000

furious messages scribbled on gumbark, eucalyptus
signata are writing to me. on a blade of grass a tiny red
& below it a bullant mound & fibery web. wind pickup.
neither saroyam's crickets nor picasso's sun it's a crow
no a raven no black cockatoos yellow-tailed overfly. or
perhaps it's the indonesian terns returning north.

watch fallen leaves become compost for new trees. hear
birdsong shape them: branches knot and change direction to
the tune of black-chinned honeyeaters courting. storage
the sound of distant waves – a spiny bottlebrush or
monocolour sky you choose which one. now seduce a
cicada, feel the warmth of your yellow spot.

D.J. Huppatz

Graffiti

Catching our breath, patterned by unseasonableness,
we feel it simultaneously, the way indifference
envelops a restaurant like a peace conference,
fresh shows of bigotry in a literary grove.
They are with us, they shadow us, stepping
out of ourselves. My old stark repertoire
does things to your complexion.
Would you go back in time, in thought, in place?
How do you feel about a dig on an afternoon
resolute as this: sunshine, tangerines,
auguries of captivated night?
Not quite as unpredictable, don't you think?
We have all witnessed that thrashing,
evasions of dark. We have been up
those stairs so many times numeracy
invades our joints. Home, so private
we are nameless, we find them raising glasses
in a timeless toast. We draw the blinds,
prospect for inner worlds, we agitate for tremors.

Peter Rose

Brian Dibble

Plus ça change . . .

An Early Elizabeth Jolley Story

ELIZABETH JOLLEY (born Monica Elizabeth Knight, 4 June 1923) has been writing since childhood.[1] Initially, she wrote collaborative stories with her sister Madelaine (20 August 1924–) when they lived in Wolverhampton (near Birmingham), and on her own when she was at Sibford (a Quaker school near the Cotswolds) from 1934 to 1940, next when she was a trainee nurse in Pyrford and later Birmingham, and finally in Edinburgh and Glasgow where she lived with her librarian husband before they emigrated with their three children to Western Australia in late November of 1959. Having had only one piece significantly published – 'The Adventures of George Henry', a children's story about a caterpillar that was broadcast on the BBC's Midlands Home Service when Jolley was twenty-four[2] – she arrived in Perth with a trunkful of manuscripts.

Success came slowly: she had a short story selected for publication by Thea Astley in 1965 ('The Talking Bricks'), started to get other stories published (after a series of sometimes vicious rejection slips), brought out her first book, *Five Acre Virgin and Other Stories* in 1976, and then became a part-time Tutor in Creative Writing at the West Australian Institute of Technology in 1978. Now she has published more than twenty books – novels, essays, short stories, and radio plays, some of them having been made into plays, and into films for television and for the cinema; and she has won every major Australian award for fiction, along with academic and civil honours – four honorary doctorates, the Order of Australia, and West Australian Citizen of the Year. And since 1998 she has been Curtin University's Professor of Creative Writing.

The bulk of Jolley's fiction focuses on the family – the self seeking a partner, pairs seeking communion, parents and children seeking intergenerational harmony and continuity – and on institutions as metaphors of the family, like schools, hospitals, boarding houses and nursing homes. If one is not cherished as a child in the family and also cherished *and* cherishing as an adult, then it is hard, in Jolley's vision, to imagine how such a person could be happy or even content. That is, the family is imagined as a potential utopia, although it is often portrayed as dystopic. Over time, Jolley has developed her technical virtuosity and cultivated her vision, a vision which starts with stories about utopic and dystopic families and family-like institutions and then leads on to more autobiographical meditations about herself, her parents, her lovers, her husband, and their children and grandchildren. In this connection, Jolley's novel *The Orchard Thieves* (Penguin, 1995) is pivotal .

While doing biographical research on Elizabeth Jolley I came across several stories she wrote in her Sibford school notebooks. I was struck by how they employed certain of her trademark techniques and also by how they anticipated her central concerns and her later thematic development of them. The piece highlighted here is 'Lehmann Sieber', a 900-word story written in 1940 in her Sibford Upper Form VI Science notebook, probably when she was seventeen.[3]

Techniques in 'Lehmann Sieber' have become Jolley trademarks. For example, on the linguistic level, although she is a fine grammarian, then as now Jolley uses minimal punctuation and run-on sentences as a way of controlling pace and flow. Also on the linguistic level, we see Jolley's use of hyperbole, as when Max fears that "he should die of hunger before his dish arrived." Sometimes hyperbole in Jolley constitutes a device of sharing intimacy, as in her early Discarder stories (*Five Acre Virgin*) where Donald and his sister "laugh their heads off": it releases tension in a moment of sharing, although at the same time it might prefigure pain as a sequel of happiness.

Elsewhere there is laughing and crying at the same time, a terrible image of the agony of feeling happiness in the moment while simultaneously knowing that the moment will not last. Of special note is the sophisticated if youthful way the piece experiments with the 'foreign' – it uses a prose that suggests it has been translated, and it uses dialect, something Jolley emphasized in *Five Acre Virgin* via her characters Uncle Bernard ('Outink to Uncle's Place') and Martha Dobsova ('The Jarrah Thieves') and via Uncle Bernard in 'The Outworks of the Kingdom' in *The Travelling Entertainer* (FACP, 1979).

Another trademark is her use of concrete detail (e.g., the fallen tree trunks, the axe, the curly hair, the painted house, the rustling wind): description is used to point up thematic import, as when the father and son increase their pace and the darkening woods give way to a cheerful place. Still another is the invocation of nature as a source of beauty and comfort to her characters, or (most insistently in the mature fiction) as an emblem of human behaviour. Here the emblem is in the form of trees: the father interprets nature's secret as the Father Tree telling the Mother Tree that it is time for everyone to go to bed – nature modelling ideal family behaviour. Related to that is Jolley's positive idealizing of the family scene by several stylizing references – wholesome images, like the mother's plumpness, and lyric ones like the sister's pretty, fair hair, as well as the pastoral image of the pure (!) goat's milk which recalls Jolley's novel *Milk and Honey* (FACP, 1984).

Comparably, the home is defined as hearth, and the ideal family depicted as having several happy children: such is Monica Knight's utopic vision as a seventeen-year-old. Jolley the adult also projects this kind of meaning onto the natural world, for example through the image of birds: the geese and doves that appear across her works, via their 'talking', inscribe their identity, define their space, declare their community and then find meaning and comfort within it – notable instances are the blessing of doves in 'Shepherd on the Roof' (*Five Acre Virgin*) as well as the ones in 'Adam's Bride' (*Woman in a Lampshade*) where the utopic possibilities founder on human needs. 'Adam's Bride' is one of Jolley's most complex and powerful early-published short stories. It marks how the idealizing of the juvenilia is seldom found in Jolley's mature fiction, except in symbols like the doves: in her later fiction the family is a problematic place.

In fact it is more on the thematic level that 'Lehmann Sieber' suggests Jolley's awareness of the complications of the family and shows her intimations of its dystopic possibilities – she jokingly said (10 September 2000) that the story "illustrates the impossibility of writing about happiness." Before discussing that, however, it is important to have some details about Jolley's family of origin. Her mother Margarete (Grete) Johanna Carolina Fehr (1896–1979) was born in Vienna where, in 1922, she met and married Jolley's father Charles Wilfrid Knight (1890–1977), a high-school science teacher who was with a Quaker relief brigade to Austria. They soon returned to the Birmingham area where the family spoke German in the home until their two girls were in their teens.

But the modest Knight home was not a happy home: the father sometimes sat in his chair white-faced with anger while the mother sometimes stormed about red-faced with anger, striking out unpredictably. Each parent had suffered from careless parenting and unfortunate childhood circumstances. Wilfrid was clearly damaged by the related facts of his father, a Methodist lay preacher, throwing him out of the house with a shilling for having disgraced the family name by spending three years in solitary confinement in Wormwood Scrubs prison as a conscientious objector to the First World War.[4] And Grete's background was one of fading glory and family chaos: her Viennese grandfather, who held doctorates in Law and Philosophy, was regarded as a *Sonderling* or local eccentric; and her father was clearly unlucky in love, his first two wives dying in their twenties, his third wife, according to the records, divorcing him after he was dead! As with Wilfrid, Grete's wartime experiences were also debilitating – family members who were not killed in the hostilities died of tuberculosis or suffered from famine. For various reasons Monica was closer to her more passive father than to her more volatile mother.

The Knight family's harmony was not enhanced by the fact that Grete had a 'special friend', a bachelor and King's Counsel twelve years her senior, Kenneth Clunes Berrington (1884–1953), who would visit every Sunday from when Monica and Madelaine were in their early teens: after the midday meal, he would go off for a German language lesson with Grete, to another room, or sometimes to his own home nearby. He took Grete and Monica to Germany in 1936, and Grete and Madelaine to Germany in 1937; and he left Grete more than £60,000 when he died, perhaps a million dollars today.[5]

Such details make some elements of the story less opaque, especially when coupled with one more fact,

namely, that Monica Knight also went to Germany on her own, to a *Bundesmädchenlager* or a Hitler girls' camp in August of 1939. This was an idyllic time: she spoke German, and her mother had conditioned her to have a positive attitude toward Germany; she and her Sibford chums had written to Hitler and received a postcard from him; she was warmly looked after by the Lunds, journalist pen-friends of her mother; and she met and befriended many young women with whom she lived communally, enjoying athletics, drama and dancing, and singing songs of praise to Hitler and the German Reich.[6] But there were gas masks under the Lunds' bed, and without warning Herr Lund grabbed Monica and her rucksack and bundled her onto the deck of a freighter bound for Hull, one of the last ships to leave Hamburg before the Second World War started on 3 September.[7]

'Lehmann Sieber' was written a year or so after that date. The title is a conflation of the names of two girls Jolley met at the camp in Hamburg, Ingeborg Lehmann and Ilse Sieber; and the mother's name 'Emmi' might point to 'M' for Jolley's mother Margarete. But it would be overreaching to look for many such point-for-point correspondences. As E. M. Forster suggests, it makes sense to interrogate the truth of the story's mood if not the truth of its facts. And three points warrant further examination in that regard. One of them is its major discordant element, where the presumably innocent child Max displays exuberant action that threatens to become something else, as he drives his sister/horse about the house with a whip. This image invokes Vronsky beating his horse in *Anna Karenina* or Gerald doing the same in *Women in Love*, or even Freud's essay 'A Child Is Being Beaten', and so suggests the sexual implications of such scenes.

Intertextual references like these also pertain when we link this episode to other Jolley fiction. For example, in a short descriptive essay in another of her notebooks from when she was thirteen, Jolley imagines a drunken greengrocer who, having come out of the pub, whips his fallen cart-pony who cannot rise.[8] Then there is the much-ashamed character in Jolley's story 'The Jarrah Thieves' who confesses to having whipped his bread-cart horse in a comparable way (*Five Acre Virgin*). Thus, both in her early and later writings Jolley uses cruelty to animals as an external symbol of an internal predisposition to a condition which can prove a bar to intimacy and communion.

The second point worth further examination relates to her story 'Clever and Pretty' (*The Travelling Entertainer*): while it might seem that the older sister is merely exhibiting a Freudian fantasy when, given a stick from a hedge, she menacingly slashes it through the air with a whipping sound, soon imagining herself wildly riding a horse along the seashore, one cannot help but recall that same older sister's envy of her younger, prettier, and sexually-precocious sister whom she callously betrays. And that the story, if autobiographical, is based on an event which took place in the late summer of 1939 when Monica and Madelaine went with their father to Conway in Wales, just a day or two after Monica's return from Hamburg.

The third point that warrants further examination is the ending of 'Lehmann Sieber' which is typical of many subsequent Jolley stories. That is, it is not a logical conclusion to a sequence which has father and son coming home from work at night, a family engaging in quality time, dining, playing and getting ready for bed: indeed it would be only somewhat less of a *non sequitur* if there were an announcement about the sister and the mother moving in with the family instead of merely moving closer. The illogicality of the ending seems underlined by the curious contradiction whereby Emmi says, "I am extremely excited", but only to the extent that "[s]he *almost* got up and danced around the table" [emphasis added].

However, the ending is more commonsensical if regarded less as narrative and more as thematic closure, that is, as an equivocal conclusion to a meditation on the family. The family's utopic possibilities are displayed in the natural setting and in the homely domestic one, but the dystopic ones are mooted in the male sibling's aggressive behaviour which mimics that which Monica Knight had anticipated in the writing of her early teens, had witnessed in Hitler's belligerence, and had imagined in her own or her character's eve-of-war behaviour toward her sister. And dystopic possibilities were strongly in her mind at the time, from the dysfunctional relationships with her parents, and from the ambivalent relationship with Mr Berrington whom she regarded as a father-figure at the same time as she knew that Berrington was humiliating her own beloved father.

This conflicted vision of the family dominates Jolley's work until the publication of *The Orchard Thieves*. In that novel the unnamed central character makes a generational leap: as she becomes a grandmother when her daughters have children, she goes from having regarded herself as a daughter to regarding herself as a mother. In doing so, that charac-

ter seems finally to process a notion that Jolley's father expressed to Jolley in a letter of 9 April 1967: "My love for my children makes me realize how much my father and mother loved me. I didn't realize it when I was younger."

Whether or not *The Orchard Thieves* is autobiographical (many of its details suggest that it is), Jolley is making a heroic leap as she contemplates a mother's unenviable position and simultaneously starts to work to forgive her own mother. That contemplation involves the hard knowledge of the fact that, however much they are loved, frequently children are so self-absorbed as not to reciprocate that love. Indeed children often become adults who never forgive their parents for real or imagined bad parenting and who, in the process, become the models they despise. My invocation of *The Orchard Thieves* in relation to 'Lehmann Sieber' is not fortuitous: the grandsons in *The Orchard Thieves* are atavistic creatures – "rogues and thieves", not unlike Hans in 'Lehmann Sieber' and, astonishingly, the younger one, like Hans, has cornflower-blue eyes.

If these atavistic boys represent a threat to the family, not inherently but symbolically as an image of the disruptive forces within us all, there is also a threat to intimacy within the grandmother, namely her ambivalence about her daughters. But in a moment of respite, when the grandchildren have run off, the grandmother has two revelations: one is "that it was not until she was a grandmother herself that she, because of her own love for her grandsons, realized how much she, as a small child had been loved. And the pity was that it was too late to acknowledge this to anyone"; and the other is that "she then came to a very real truth, which was that the great love which holds the mother to the child does not necessarily travel in the other direction". Having paid homage to her grandparents and parents, and having made cherishing gestures to her grandchildren and children, Jolley is left in the position of displaying her own need to be cherished by her children and grandchildren.

Precisely that daughter-mother-grandmother situation is portrayed in 'Lehmann Sieber', where the mother is anxious about intimacy with her own mother, wanting her not too far but not too close. A condition of simultaneous intimacy and alienation obtained in the Knight household, and then again in the Jolley household, and it took Monica Elizabeth Knight Jolley more than fifty years to define and to start analysing the problem. That Elizabeth Jolley's meditation on the family is not yet finished is suggested by the novel's conclusion which mimics the *non sequitur* of 'Lehmann Sieber':

> The grandmother, putting the baby up to her shoulder and feeling the softness of the baby's cheek against her own, remarked that there was really only one week between a bad haircut and a good haircut.

ENDNOTES

This is a revised version of a paper given 14 October 2000 at the Sixth International Conference on the Short Story in English held at the University of Iowa.

1. Called Bunti at home, at her husband's insistence she chose Elizabeth as her preferred Christian name.
2. A nine-minute story read by Courtney Hope, one of several by different writers, broadcast 23 August 1947 in the 55-minute Children's Hour program (no sound recording exists). My thanks to Martyn Turner of the BBC for providing documentation about this program, including the facts that it started at 5pm, and that London and other regions had their own Children's Hour programs. For the record, Jolley's first published piece was a 24-line article on Vitamins in *The Owl: A Journal of Popular Science* issued by the Sibford School Science Society, No. 1, Autumn Term 1937, p.10.
3. Jolley said to B. Dibble (10 September 2000) that she does not specifically remember writing the story but nonetheless knows it was written out of homesickness after she started nurse training at St Nicholas and St Martin's Orthopaedic Hospital in Pyrford, Surrey. She was there from 31 August 1940 to the end of 1942, before moving to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. My thanks to her for allowing 'Lehmann Sieber' to be transcribed and published.
4. For Jolley on her parents (including this incident) see 'What Sins to Me Unknown Dipped Me in Ink?' in Caroline Lurie, ed., *Central Mischief: Elizabeth Jolley on Writing, Her Past, and Herself*, Viking/Penguin, 1992, pp.1–12.
5. See 'Mr Berrington' in *Central Mischief*, pp.331–38.
6. Tellingly, two of the young women (now in their seventies) deny being at that camp at that time, although their names, addresses and birth dates appear in their own hand in Monica Knight's notebook.
7. For Jolley on this event, see 'Of Butchers and Bilberry Baskets,' *Central Mischief*, pp.39–45.
8. 'The Green-Grocer's Pony', a 17 November [1936] entry in her Form U[pper] III notebook for English.

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Lehmann Sieber (c. 1940)

Elizabeth Jolley

A LARGE RED SUN WAS SETTING behind the pine trees when little Max climbed over the fallen tree trunks to join the bearded Father. Over one shoulder he carried his axe and on the other shoulder sat Max grasping the curly head for safety. In this way the pair descended the mountain side on their way home to the wooden painted house. The woods were dark and a gathering wind rustled in the tree tops.

"What are the trees saying to each other" asked Max, looking up into the trees around him.

"Oh my boy" said his Father. "They tell secrets one to another perhaps one day you will understand what they say. That tall one – you can just see the sky above it – is saying goodnight to his little wife beside him. They are all going to sleep now and it's high time you my mannikin were fast asleep." Hans, for that was his name, set off at a slow run, the little boy held more tightly to the curls. A small path led them through the trees till they came to a clearing through which a small mountain stream danced and tumbled, to the right was the house, the heavy wooden door stood open a friendly patch of light lay on the ground and several small paths came from the chinks and cracks in the shutters which had already been fastened across the window.

Hans planted the child on his feet and let him race to the doorway where he was met by a girl who caught him in her arms and carried him inside.

The mother was busy by the fire place where something with a good smell was steaming and bubbling, Anna the elder daughter aged seventeen years old, slender and fair haired, was setting the wooden dishes on the table which stood in the centre of the room.

Karinchen, three years younger than Anna, capered round the room followed by Max who held in his hand a home-made whip. Hans entered the room and strode to the fire place. The mother plump and short raised her face to be kissed. Hans did so and peered into the pot on the flames.

"Emmi, that reminds me how hungry I am is supper nearly ready?" Emmi nodded and said "Anna I think it is time to fetch the milk in from the stream, the Father is hungry and he will soon be ready to eat."

While Anna fetched the large bowl of goat's milk from its cool place in the stream Hans washed his hands and head under the pump.

"Children! Children!" cried Emmi holding her ears "What a noise! Karinchen, Max, what are you playing?" The two stopped the game, Karinchen flopped onto one of the carved wooden chairs flushed, her pretty fair hair untidy and dishevelled. Max explained.

"Oh mother love we're playing horse and driver Karinchen is my horse and I whip her to make her gallop." Emmi laughed and deftly placed the soup on the table.

"Come along" she said seating herself at one end. The others sat down eagerly to the hot meal, while it was served Anna poured out the pure goat's milk and Max nibbled a piece of black bread in case he should die of hunger before his dish arrived.

Hans smiled on the two girls as they laughed and chatted together he told them of the day's work higher up the mountain side. Emmi listened and at-

tended to the wants of her family. The blue and white china on the carved dresser twinkled in the jumping fire light the lamp cast its warm light on the happy faces of the family as they sat eating at the table. They had not much furniture just enough to suffice. The room was simple spotless and homely. Emmi loved her little wooden house and kept it spick and span. Max ate his soup, his head nodded and his large eyes which were as blue as cornflowers closed.

"Emmi," said Hans. "The boy is heavy with sleep. His large head is rolling and he hardly keeps his eyes open." Emmi nodded and gathering the sleepy child in her plump arms she carried him into the next room where she put him to bed in a huge old wooden cradle.

When the remains of the meal had been cleared away the family sat in the fire corner where it was cosy and warm.

Anna and Karinchen took out their sewing and industriously bent their fair heads over their work. Emmi sat with her knitting and Hans dozed in his chair. At length he spoke.

"Emmi you look as if you are bursting with some secret. What has happened today?"

Emmi laid down her knitting and looked very important, the girls left their sewing in order to listen.

"Well" she began. "As I suppose you all know of your Aunt Poser, my sister in Magdeburg—well—this morning I received a letter from her and she and my mother are taking a small flat in Dresden where they intend to live in future. This of course means that they are considerably nearer now and we shall be able to see them more often. I am extremely excited." She almost got up and danced round the kitchen.

Michael Ackland

'The Iceman Cometh'

James McAuley's quarrel with academe

McAULEY'S RESPONSE to universities is remembered, if at all, as harsh and intolerant. John Docker, for instance, a decade after the poet's death, likened him to the joyless, death-bringing Iceman, and most recently Cassandra Pybus has portrayed him as "a strident campaigner against communism and . . . a politically transgressive intellectual".[1] Their memories of the right-wing activist are amply supported by the views of liberal-minded contemporaries. The political scientist, Heinz Arndt, incensed by McAuley's attacks on moderate viewpoints, wrote in 1958: "With what hubris he besmirches the traditions and values to which he once owed allegiance";[2] while Harold Stewart, an old friend and inveterate punster, poured scorn on "Quad-Rant" and its editor's "omniscient catholicism", remarking: "Unlike Jim, I . . . cannot really provide water-tight answers to all awkward questions. Real virtue to me is friendliness, compassion, wisdom, love, sympathetic joy, and inner peace".[3] Yet there were other and contradictory facets to McAuley's character. As Professor of English at the University of Tasmania he ran his department democratically, was provocative yet open-minded in seminars, and insisted that diverse viewpoints be heard. He could also, however, savage disciplines to which he had given his best years as "those rickety rackety subjects which like to call themselves human or social sciences", or predict that present educational reforms would lead to a new age of barbarism.[4] How then do we explain the contempt expressed for his own profession? Should his intemperate utterances be seen simply as a product of the Cold War, especially of the heated polemic generated by conflict in Vietnam and the student revolt of 1968? Certainly he portrayed universities during this period as dangerous breeding-grounds of dissent, and came to regard the majority of academics as contemptible liberals, fellow-travellers or worse. But his animosity, as we shall see, had its roots in his chequered career at Sydney University between 1935 and 1940. Then, too, he found himself out of step with prevailing attitudes on campus. The university, in his eyes, answered his forthright criticism by blocking his academic ambitions, and so left him arguably with a grudge that educationalists discovered to their cost during the Menzies' era.

Sydney University, in the wake of the depression, was an extremely conservative, elitist institution, catering to a strong demand for practical training and clear career paths. Mass tertiary education was still decades away, and most of the three and a half thousand students admitted were fee-paying, came from well-to-do backgrounds, and subscribed to the eleventh commandment 'Thou shalt not be different'.[5] McAuley, who had won a public exhibition at the Leaving Certificate which exempted him from fees, quickly earned a reputation for brilliance and irreverence. He found the lectures "dull compost", echoed Stewart's verdict that the courses were "arid and boring to distraction",[6] and turned for stimulation to the Free Thought and Literary Societies, run under the aegis of the one professor renowned for fearlessly bringing objective criticism to bear on received opinions, John Anderson. There Anderson proselytized for modern literature, such as James Joyce's banned *Ulysses*, or wove a spell that left disciples persuaded that they "had just witnessed an important new contribution to the theory of aesthetics".[7] Consequently, much has been made of his influence on McAuley, who acknowledged that the philosopher "taught so many of us to think"; however, crucial areas of disagreement between them have been entirely neglected, as has McAuley's statement that he was only "an Andersonian . . . with reservations".

A major factor shaping his response to Anderson, as well as to his *alma mater*, was that same hubris pinpointed by Arndt twenty years later. McAuley arrived at university persuaded of his own superiority. At Fort Street Boys' High School he had distinguished himself academically and shone as its school captain. Moreover, he and two close friends, who were gifted in mathematics, were reading "way ahead" in their respective subjects: "We played a sort of game, we got hold of the university third-year papers for the previous year and satisfied ourselves that we could pass. We tended to treat the university rather lightly when we went there, did our own things, and we all did pretty well". That meant, in his case, largely ignoring lectures, which were the predominant mode of instruction, to pursue a self-conducted reading program, so that "the City of Sydney Lending Library [was] a great deal more my university – and the Fisher [Library] – than what happened in lectures". Studying for exams was crammed into the last weeks, usually with great success, except for his final year in Philosophy. Anderson had asked him to work towards a First in this subject but he only passed with Third Class Honours, whereas in English he finished with First Class Honours and the University Medal. These results deprived him of a coveted travelling scholarship for which he needed a double First. Nevertheless, he saw himself as a "hotshot literary academic" in the making, with only a Master's dissertation before him as the last stepping stone to postgraduate study in England.

Years later the poet attributed this undergraduate debacle to finding his "sympathies were being withdrawn from Philosophy. I just couldn't bring myself to put the pressure and energy into it". What was at the root of this disinclination? The main problem was literary. He was discovering his vocation in poetry and apparently found it difficult to muster up enthusiasm for an increasingly secondary field of interest. Also, as a practising writer, he was moving towards a view of literary creation that ran counter to Andersonian theory. In the words of an acolyte who tutored McAuley, "aesthetics is a positive science".[8] Art is to be subjected to a rational critique, which demands of it the coherent development of a clear theme to the exclusion of subjective, emotional, subconscious or mystical considerations. At that time, the work of the future co-author of Ern Malley was far from this stringent, impersonal ideal and in addresses to the Literary Society he took issue with the master's aesthetic theory. Not only did it turn a blind eye to music or metrical effects, where organizing principles other than logical ones were at work, but it failed to account for verse like Donne's or Eliot's. The Andersonians countered that good art has to be realistically and rationally coherent, so that "the distorted presentation of real things . . . in Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' . . . is rejected as bad art", whereas McAuley resolutely supported the use of disparate ideas, mental conflict and varied effects of wit to present "psychological problems" and "a breakdown of traditional beliefs".[9]

This same commitment to his craft put him at odds with the conformist, intolerant climate on campus, so that by 1941 he was fulminating about how snobbishness and the ivory tower syndrome combined to create a "degree of social awareness amongst University people [which] is humiliatingly low, even lower than that of the outside public".[10] A major cause of his disenchantment, as well as an important focus of his university activities, was the undergraduate magazine *Hermes*. Funded from the coffers of the SRC (Students' Representative Council), it was directly accountable to student opinion, and in 1935, his first year at university, widespread discontent with its policy translated into an SRC vote to reduce the usual three numbers to one. At issue was the content of *Hermes*, and more fundamentally the parochial response of the Australian community to modernism. Was the magazine to present the most advanced literary endeavours on campus, or to succumb to the prevailing climate of "limp acquiescence" (ii,8),[11] which expected material immediately accessible to undergraduates with only a bare pass in Leaving Certificate English? In 1933 this conflict had come to a head under the editorship of Howard Daniel. He had not only published verse which was aggressively avant-garde, but he had also thundered provocatively: "Show me the undergraduate interested in poetry who has no adequate knowledge of modern verse and I will show you a man who has not adjusted to his environment" (ii,9). As ensuing charges of "obscure drivel", "smug intellectuality" and "appalling taste" demonstrated,[12] many refused to adjust to the tempo of Daniel and later editors like McAuley, Auchterlonie (the future Dorothy Green) and Donald Horne. In 1935 the editors were exhorting their potential readership to "keep on paying for us", in the face of opinion which "think[s] us dear at 4d. a time" (ii,8), and projecting their journal as a haven for originality and less regulated thinking which were "fairly scarce within these walls". But

by 1941 the magazine under A.J. Marshall was reaffirming mainstream tastes. Instead of past "pretentiousness" he hoped for "an Australian flavour", as well as sincerity and "realism where possible".[13] In the interim, *Hermes* was one of the few local magazines to welcome genuinely modernist works, and McAuley's many contributions to it accorded well with its belligerent program.

In 1937 for example, in addition to meeting his final year requirements, he became its editor and provided a foretaste of that willingness to affront public opinion which would be a hallmark of his later editorship of *Quadrant*. Indeed, his mid-year commentary, 'After All', commences with an epigraph from Blake's *Milton*: "For we have Hirelings . . . who would, if they could, for ever depress mental and prolong Corporeal War" (30), and suggests that he was envisaging a program of Blakean "mental warfare" against his blinkered, chauvinistic times. The first editorial, 'Less of It', attacks literary nationalism as "an essential ingredient in the fascist stew", and defends imitation of overseas trends as an important phase of "literary adolescence", after which "we come to [sic] age and have our own latch-key". In 'After All' intellectual censorship is brought into uncomfortable proximity with community neuroses that threaten world peace and Australian democracy is diagnosed as suffering from "persecution mania, delusions of grandeur and . . . paranoia". His final editorial, 'Reading-Time Six Minutes', highlights the danger posed by a malleable public, blind to all but superficial messages, which is prepared to accept the prevarications of leaders like Mr Anthony Eden as frank, courageous utterances of "what the line of British policy will be, and what issues are really at stake". The older McAuley is clearly recognizable in this critic of repression and misinformation, or in his refusal to be "unduly disturbed by the confused quacking noises that issue from the local barnyard" (i, 38), but not his later self as classicist and Catholic convert in this champion of literary modernism who, in speaking of T.S. Eliot's own conversion, remarked that "the more a poet becomes reconciled to Catholicism the more his art suffers" (i,15) – an insight McAuley would attempt to disprove in the post-war decades.

The same year he underlined his dissatisfaction with the Andersonian alternative to contemporary apathy by defending Blake's work before the Literary Society on 23 April.[14] Successive assertions in his talk read like blows aimed at Andersonian over-reliance on analytical thought. Blake "attacked the traditional idea that reason was 'higher' than passion and instinct". The evidence of our fall is reliance on the five senses, which leaves humans cut off from infinity "as isolated beings, each with[in] his own selfhood". Salvation demands death of the merely reasoning self and return to spiritual unity, or "man's redemption depends on the regeneration of imagination". McAuley's Blake is recognizably that of modern scholarship, arrived at with the aid of only fledgling specialist commentary. No excuses are offered for the poet's mysticism, his sanctioning of iconoclasm and sexual liberation as paths to individual truth, or for espousing the superiority of poetry over empirical thought. Here was confirmation of the speaker's own inclinations and the affinity he felt for Blake was intense, as was attested to by Stewart, who was himself well versed in the Englishman's work: "If you had to chose [sic] any one poet as a principal influence in his [McAuley's] work, it would be of course Blake winning hands down".[15] Yet forty years on in 'Culture and Counter-culture' Blake is described by McAuley as "a quite uncritical recipient of every eccentric idea", a "complete anarchist" and, finally, "a ratbag. Any appreciation of him which glides over this is merely evasive". These charges can only make a reader wince. Better knowledge is sacrificed to the polemical needs of the hour and the Romantic poet is arraigned, in effect, for the "embarrassing pretensions and nonsense" of McAuley's own youth, such as his 1937 critique of "the widespread ignorance and prejudice which surrounds all radical movements" (ii, 30). Blake traversed an immense trajectory between the antinomian *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and the spiritual vision of his later prophetic books, but a similar distance often separates McAuley as a contributor to *Hermes* from his later avatar as the guiding hand behind *Quadrant*.

The final phase of his progressive alienation from university offerings came with his Master's thesis. In 1939, instead of setting off for study overseas, he had to admit that his career prospects had suffered a serious check. As he put it in a contemporaneous story: "'Have you still your old ambitions? Everyone thought you were bound to succeed'. And yet I haven't. At least one must reduce the facts to some dramatic simplification, and that seems as good as any" (iii, 15). His last chance for a travelling scholarship – that vital first step towards an assured academic post – was his Master's thesis. Again, however,

his unabated self-assurance led him to challenge the parochialism of the English Department with a blatantly comparative topic entitled 'Symbolism: An Essay in Poetics'. It focused on the poetic heritage which had preoccupied him since Fort Street and aimed, furthermore, "to grapple with one of the burning questions: how does one relate symbolism in literature to symbolism as Freud and Jung and others were talking about it? . . . [and] to repel the invasion by Freud into literary symbolism" (I,15).[16] Divided into three separately numbered sections, the thesis dealt first with mystical symbolism, as exemplified by Blake, Traherne and Lawrence. Part Two covered the nineteenth century from Novalis to Mallarmé, extending the discussion to include Eliot and surrealism. The final section focused on "symbolism as a fundamental process of experience" and, nothing daunted, offered a "general theory of the nature of poetry". Despite his disclaimer to be merely endeavouring "to introduce a modest order into one's convictions", the scope and achievement of this extended essay are very impressive. It consistently tackles major theoretical issues with maturity and sometimes wit ("The saints gained a certain proficiency in casting out devils: we find that a slightly larger number of cases yield to treatment if we cast out complexes instead" [I, 5]), and it reveals a keen interest in mysticism as a means of coming to terms with subconscious or spiritual promptings, as opposed to unstructured surrealistic experience which is dismissed as "mysticism decapitated" (II,43). As even this brief overview indicates, the thesis, apart from admirably meeting the academic requirement for sustained, original research, provides a rigorous stocktaking of the traditions most influential on his own art, as well as a guide to major concerns that would inspire his research for decades to come.

Why then did this ambitious thesis, submitted in 1940, fail to gain him the desired travelling scholarship? It is a matter of public record that, although awarded First Class Honours, it was ranked second to a Master's dissertation by Thelma Herring. Consequently she went overseas, returned to her *alma mater* and pursued an orthodox, uncontroversial career. Years after, McAuley recounted how Howarth, when pressed for an explanation of his MA's ranking, attributed it to the fact that the thesis had to be sent to the Modern Languages and Psychology Departments as part of the examination process and, finally, to its unconventional pagination and frequent Gallicisms. It was an explanation that failed to explain, but at least the English Department's motives appeared to be disinterested and correct, indeed impeccable, procedures had been observed. "At the time", McAuley records, "I thought this was just the stone end." Equally important was a later admission:

> I think I didn't fit their pattern. It was quite evident to them, of course, that my attendance was exceedingly patchy, that I was clearly on my own and not attaching myself to them or being the faithful student, being formed in their mould. . . . the M.A. thesis brought it to a head, in a sense. This was alien to them.

His attitude, in other words, had put academics offside, as in his third year when he added public scoffing to his cavalier disregard of the system. First, he was reported to have said at an SRC meeting that lectures were "completely superfluous". Then he wrote to *Honi Soit* to correct this overstatement. Occasionally lectures were of use, he conceded, but at issue was freedom of choice: "A student's business is to study certain questions in the best way he can, and it is not his business to waste his time at the dictation of his teachers. If he wants to waste his time there are many better ways which his own inclinations will suggest".[17] His disdain for the English Department was especially pronounced, while he let it be known that he had "seen through the traditional reactionary academic . . . futilities".[18] Similarly, in his thesis he pontificated on the nature of verse and on the major European poets of two centuries, arraigning great names like Novalis and Hugo for alleged shortcomings. Vain and opinionated, the aspiring academic had unwittingly prepared his own crash, and the system he had dismissed as moribund proved potent in sidelining its outspoken critic.

McAuley neither forgot nor forgave this devastating setback. In 1941, writing under the pseudonym of 'Dulcie Renshaw', he savaged the newly launched *Southerly* for "gutless irresponsibility" in abdicating the task of "represent[ing] what is living in Australian literary tendencies". Instead, it had allegedly opted for trite commentary and poems which "are nauseating little gobbets of Victorian 'pwettiness'".[19] His larger target, however, was the university's English Department, responsible alike for *Southerly* and the recent grading of his Master's thesis, so that the pen-name was needed, in the words of one of his circle, to keep "Howarth and co. guessing".[20] In the 1950s his animosity towards universi-

ties re-emerged when he accepted the position of foundation editor of *Quadrant*, in whose pages academics constituted an important sub-group of the "gentle, literate, sensitive, nice, crumby persons" attacked for presiding over "the great unculture".[21] In 1961 he charged university staff with self-interested blindness, cowardice and irresponsibility, which permitted "the malignant, the hysterical and the foolish" to dictate opinion and agendas.[22] Off the record he was blunter. Academics, he maintained, simply "play the female part and stand around waiting to get fucked".[23] McAuley's stridency grew apace with the Peace Movement. In 1967 the local press seized on his assertion that students had now replaced the Waterside Workers as the most easily manipulated group in the community, and the following year he confronted the radicalized Monash student body with a carefully nuanced account of its protests as undemocratic and subject to professional manipulation. To an international forum he was more forthright, likening student discontent to a mutating virus, directly traceable to the French Revolution. No longer needing to placate undergraduate sensitivity, he painted a devastating picture of student ineptitude, "prolonged adolescence" and of "sharks gliding under the surface of the children's play-pool".[24]

With death imminent in May, 1976 he offered a disingenuous explanation for his disillusionment. The occasion was an important one. It was an interview for the Oral History section of the National Library in Canberra, conducted by Catherine Santamaria, the daughter of his comrade-in-arms B.A. Santamaria. To her he could open his heart and set the record straight for posterity. Instead, he traced his negative attitude towards academe to the Orr case: "One learnt a lot by going through it, of course. I am afraid one of the things I learnt was not to have a very high opinion of academics, I have never quite recovered". The suggestion of lost naivety or injured good opinion was intentionally misleading, but his unwillingness to open an unhappy chapter of his past to the prying eyes of left-wing ideologues was understandable during a period when increasingly "all discourse consisted of recriminations".[25] Moreover McAuley, whenever practicable, assumed the moral high ground. Typically he emphasized the need at universities for "inner discipline [to] enforce standards of scholarship and ethics and keep a reasonably clean house",[26] castigated professorial moves that thwarted his own designs as "naked piece[s] of political warfare", and launched his own counter-plots or diatribes.[27] And to the end he remained, as his one-time friend Archbishop Young remarked in a requiem mass, "deep down a very private man".[28] The older McAuley was as unlikely to have acknowledged the strengths of his former literary lodestar, William Blake, as the bitter but seminal lesson dealt him by the Sydney Arts' Faculty, which left him a man who regarded universities as inherently contested and manipulable, and who later contributed powerfully to making them so.

ENDNOTES

1. See respectively *In a Critical Condition: Reading Australian Literature*, Penguin Books, 1986, p.7, from which the quotation in my paper's title is taken and *The Devil and James McAuley*, UQP, 1999, p.xii.
2. 'Flirting with the Anti-Christ', *Observer*, 17 May 1958, quoted in *The Devil and James McAuley*, p.169.
3. Letter to G. Smith, 25 May 1982, Harold Stewart Papers, NL MS 8973/16/6 [NL indicates a ms. collection held at the National Library, Canberra].
4. 'Conditions and Positions: Thoughts on Present Student Discontent', typescript, n.d. [early 1969], John Cotter collection, and 'Education in Decline: Towards a New Barbarism', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August 1975, p.6.
5. Amy Witting, *I for Isobel*, Penguin, 1989, p.95.
6. Respectively from McAuley interview with Hazel de Berg, September 1975, Oral History, NLA TRC 836 and from letter to Michael Heyward, 30 October 1988, Heyward Papers, La Trobe Library, MS PA 96/159/6. Subsequent quotations from McAuley, unless otherwise indicated, are from this interview with de Berg or from a later one with Catherine Santamaria, May 1976, Oral History, NLA TRC 876.
7. Donald Horne, *The Education of Young Donald*, Penguin, 1975, p.206.
8. J.A. Passmore, 'Psychology and Psycho-analysis', *Hermes*, ii (1936), p.25.
9. From an address on 'Metaphysical Poetry' of 19 June, reported in the *Union Recorder*, 2 July 1936, p.126.
10. 'New Themes in the Revue', *Honi Soit*, 27 June 1941, p.3.
11. Wherever possible, locations in *Hermes* are given parenthetically in the text.
12. See for instance 'The Maw of "Hermes"', *Honi Soit*, 17 April 1935, p.5.
13. *Honi Soit*, 22 May 1941, p.3.
14. *Union Recorder*, 6 May 1937, pp.70–71.
15. Letter to H.M. Green, 5 April 1944, H.M. Green papers, NL MS 3925, folder 17. This verdict was later confirmed by McAuley: "After Brennan's death I know of no-one in Australia in the 1930s besides myself that was really deeply involved in Blake" ('Culture and Counter-culture', *Quadrant*, 20, ix [1976], p.14).
16. The reference is to the section and the page where the quotation appears in his Master's thesis of 1940.

17. 29 September 1937, p.37.
18. See respectively Dorothy Green's interview with Heyward ("He was very critical of the English Department . . . but the Department wasn't as hopeless as Jim thought" [Michael Heyward Papers, LaTrobe Library, MS PA 96/159/8]) and Oliver Somerville's letter to Harry Hooton, 24 August 1942, Hooton Papers, Mitchell Library ML MS 569.
19. '"Southerly" Busted', *Honi Soit*, 22 May 1941, p.3.
20. Letter of Oliver Somerville to Hooton, 1 August 1942, Harry Hooton Papers, ML MS 569. It identifies McAuley as the inventor of the pseudonym, and Stewart as using it in 1942.
21. Letter to Hope, 28 November 1961, Hope Papers, NL MS 5836, folder 85.
22. From a typescript of 'The Catholic Image', a talk presented at the Sixth Christian Social Week (3–10 September 1961), John Cotter collection.
23. John Cotter Memoirs, typescript, p.114, John Cotter collection. Cotter was Tasmanian state president of the NCC in the early 1960s and a close friend of McAuley.
24. 'Conditions and Positions', pp.1–4.
25. Vincent Buckley, 'Remembering What You Have to Do', *Quadrant*, 12. v (1968). p.26.
26. 'Conditions and Positions', p.6.
27. Interview with Santamaria. In context he is speaking specifically of the refusal by Professorial Board to ratify the appointment of Dr Frank Knopfelmacher to a senior lectureship in Philosophy.
28. Typescript, John Cotter collection.

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Half and Half

Over the back fence
large white moon vine
blossoms are blowsy
limp after a long night
of wind and rain and
trying to stay wide-eyed
amidst the turmoil.
It's exactly how I feel
half asleep
half
awake
as I head
down the back lane
to catch
the train to link
up with the bus
on my way to work

Colleen Z. Burke

SPIRIT HOUSE V BEND

the creek bank above the estuary
is bare & eroded
cattle shit stinks in the water

I cut sedge grass from the swamp
dark-green & cloudy
the sharp tips wander
as I carry them

on the creek bend
I tie the stalks into a sheaf
stand it up and weave
more stalks to strengthen the walls

there are no trees along the creek
the little grass house
lifts slightly in the wind

a cloudy-green spreads
east across the creek flat
following the water
like the beginning of vegetation

Louise Crisp

Alan Seymour

overland and Memory

AFTER A FEW DECADES away – with occasional working visits home – my partner and I came back in the mid-1990s to live again in Australia. The ultimate destination was Sydney (our much-loved base in the fifties and early sixties) but for eight months we stayed, for family reasons, in our home town Perth which we hadn't lived in since 1950. On an earlier visit I'd met Delys Bird, co-editor of UWA's literary magazine *Westerly*. I didn't know then that *Westerly* would lead me back to *overland* – which in an earlier life I'd read, joined other writers and readers to defend against criticism from the Menzies government and written for – periodically – over a quarter-century span. Delys asked me to do a piece on coming back to live in my home country. We planned to go to the Dawn Service on 25 April; she thought this should be the subject.

My childhood was spent in Fremantle but I don't remember anyone in our working-class family observing or even discussing that day. (No ex-servicemen in the family; my father had been too old to enlist even in the First World War and died – or rather was killed – a few years before the Second.) Later, living and working in Perth, the thought of going to an Anzac Day ceremony never crossed my mind. Many young people were not 'cynical', as PM Howard keeps saying about that era, simply sceptical and questioning of this 'dwelling on the past'.

The Dawn Service in Perth is held in what may be Anzac Day's most dramatically beautiful location in all Australia, on the edge of the hill in King's Park looking out over the city and the river to distant low hills behind which, towards the end of the service, the sun will rise. In fact it was not only the setting but – no military ranting – the unexpectedly low-key tone of the ceremony which impressed. The article was published, I decided to subscribe to *Westerly* and found my sub linked to a scheme involving subs to a small, eccentric magazine *Hobo* which I soon decided was read less for its sometimes interesting poetry than for its long, idiosyncratic editorials – and to *overland* which I'd read and hoped to write for in its early days. The first thing I'd sent to Stephen Murray-Smith (SMS) was a short story 'The Law of the Land' about the corrupt cop culture which neglected or colluded with big-time crime but herded Saturday night drunks into the Black Maria, held them without charge and beat them up in police cells.

The poet/playwright Laurence Collinson, one of SMS's editorial advisors, divulged that one phrase in the story caused offence, another set of police targets described as "pale, posturing homosexuals". It was the alliteration more than the accuracy or otherwise of the phrase which had popped it into my mind in the first place; this was to be an early lesson in favouring exactitude and fairness over the temptation to be cute. I conceded that my phrase could "reinforce existing prejudices" and agreed, if the piece were published, to cut it. Bowing to censorship or accepting just criticism? (Me and Shostakovitch . . .) As a detail in the story it didn't seem important enough to fight over and I'd already felt a touch guilty about using it. Oddly, I don't recall whether the story was published or not.

In the first few years in London I became a theatre critic for *The London Magazine* but my main income was from writing original television plays, eight of them in four years. My mate was offered a teaching job in Jeddah and I managed to get a visa as well; we'd wanted to sample living rather than touristing in a genuinely foreign culture, so in the mid-sixties went off to Saudi Arabia.

This heartland of Islam, where the Prophet had been born and was buried, was much easier then for infidels to live in than it is, I gather, now in the age of the fundamentalists. Politics were driven by religion or the struggle against its power; with Santamaria then in full spate at home teasing parallels could be found. I wrote a piece and sent it to Steve but had no response. Years later when I met him at last in London – at a dinner in Laurie's flat – Steve looked blank when, with my usual tact, I asked why if he didn't like my Saudi piece he hadn't let me know instead of preserving an unhelpful silence. He had never received the piece or my follow-up letter wondering about its fate. Our envelopes were addressed not in Arabic, obviously, but in Latin script. My missives to *overland* were not the only things mailed into oblivion.

After eight months in Saudi Arabia I was told to leave because I had the wrong kind of visa – which their embassy in London had issued to me. I flew to Beirut – long before its civil war – and rented a small apartment with a glimpse of the Med. Commissioned to write a new stage play, I sent it to Sydney as requested. This time it wasn't banned, just ignored, a letter acknowledging receipt and then silence.

We went to Turkey for a summer holiday and stayed five years, Ron teaching English (literature not language), psychology and philosophy to young Turks with an insatiable appetite for knowledge – and this time *overland* did receive the two pieces I sent on life in that paradox-ridden, irresistible country and published, I think, both of them. I wrote, and had published, in Britain and the US, two novels which had a couple of excellent reviews but didn't set either the Thames or the Hudson on fire.

When in the 1980s Laurie Collinson died (of a collapsed liver, a bizarre death for a man who was virtually a teetotaller) Stephen wrote asking me to do an article-length obit in which I honoured Laurie and his own candour by portraying him as I'd known him, warts and all.

And then I lost touch with *overland* and the years slipped by. We were back in London, bought a house, became settled people with a mortgage, a garden, sorties to Safeways, regular jobs. For the BBC I commissioned almost a hundred original TV plays from new and established writers but, after six years hard, returned to the freelance life. Suddenly it was the 1990s and those long-cherished plans to come home to live had been too often postponed. I worked hard in British TV to earn enough to survive awhile without any subventions as I tried to write That Novel which I'd been postponing for years. And a few months ago, reading an *overland* issue I'd put aside when it first arrived, I found Lyn McLeavy's powerful article 'The Woolbales of Wrath' and a couple of details in it went right to the heart of me and gave me back, but chasteningly transformed, a part of my life I'd all but forgotten. Since then it's been mulching away in me, stirring, disturbing.

In all the years abroad I'd thought and talked little of my Fremantle childhood. English friends weren't interested, reminiscences of Australian life didn't crop up as we find they do here. Now it all came flooding back.

Like McLeavy's great-grandfather my Dad was a lumper – and so long ago was he born they could have been contemporaries. His parents were born in England, he in New Zealand. His grandfather and father had been at sea but for some reason his father brought his wife and son to Victoria where, on some pinched, gnarled bit of land, a cheap lot left after the surrounding good acres had been snapped up by more prosperous persons, he tried to become a farmer. After a year, the family legend had it, he told his son that to have any money, regular money, coming in he'd have to go back to sea. He left his son to run the farm. The boy was then eleven years old.

They got water from a creek at the bottom of the hill, turned old kerosene tins into buckets (someone will have to explain to younger readers what a kerosene tin was) and between them carried their water supplies from the creek up to their rough shack every day. His mother boiled up all the water on the kitchen fire; it was used for drinking, cooking and washing – dishes, clothes and themselves. After a year of hard yacker with little return young Herbert Augustus told his mother he couldn't manage and, when she argued, ran away to sea. He was twelve, then the normal enrolment age for entry into the navy or on a merchant vessel. Whether in his travels he ever found his father I don't know. He did find the girl who – many years (decades!) later – was to be my mother, Louisa Mary Warren, a Cockney, a real one, born, as she often announced, "within the sound of Bow Bells". In her mid-teens she was living in the East End not far from the docks. Somehow (I do wonder how) she met H.A.S., then still a seaman.

When in port in London the then thirty-five-year-old Bert stayed in a little room above a pub near Wapping Steps. In the early 1980s a BBC team was shooting my adaptation of Antonia White's four *Frost in May* novels, rescued from oblivion after their

original success in the 1920s by that redoubtable ex-Melbourne founder of Virago Press, Carmen Callil. In the final sequence our young protagonist Clara, a rebel against Catholic orthodoxy and driven to breakdown by her domineering father, walks slowly one night down these very Steps planning suicide in the Thames and only at the last moment rallying her strength and turning back to make another stab at life.

Watching the shoot in that even now – at least at night – lonely and eerie little corner of London, I wondered if the pub we were using as the unit's base in the alley at the top of the Steps could possibly be the one my Dad had stayed in – nearly three decades before he became my Dad. (A sister had told me Mum used to say: "It was in his little room in that pub that he took me down" – a wonderfully demure expression for what may have been a somewhat startling experience for a late-Victorian sixteen-year-old.)

They married a year later. There were nine births over the following decades – not unusual then even for non-Catholic families – but three of the daughters died, two from illness and the other in an accident (details unknown); apparently there'd been miscarriages too. By the time I belatedly – and I'm sure mistakenly – arrived Louisa Mary was in her early forties and my father sixty-three. Long before, even before the First World War, they had shipped to Australia, to Fremantle. He brought his mother over from Victoria – I think she'd survived by giving up the farm and staying with sisters in Box Hill – but she and Mum, no surprise, didn't get along and Grandma was gone long before I was born.

I grew up with the family legend that Dad had lived through the last days of sail and didn't like steam ("no romance"). The only time he talked much to me was to tell me of working up near the top of the mast taking in the sails as the legendary storms blew up, grimly hanging on above the churning ocean, sometimes – rounding Cape Horn – seeing shipmates slip and drop into the water far below, carried away with no chance of recovery. (*Romance?*) Then, in steamship days, hoping for gradual promotion until one day he would be master of his own ship, it all came to an abrupt end. Whether he was sacked – or as they'd say now in that glib, morally evasive term 'downsized' – because times were bad for the shipping line I have no idea.

Dad had been connected with ships and ports all his working life and found a job on the wharves. As a seaman he'd worked his way up to the level of third mate, a position which, though modest, seems to presuppose a knowledge of the sea and ships and ability to deal with a crew. A lumper, by comparison, sounded unskilled. But I've long had the impression that, though conscientious, our Dadda may not have been very competitive. He was tall and straight and strong, physically capable, dignified, quiet, fair in his dealings with us. Mum was talkative, quick-tempered, flamboyant. She dominated us, he was a remoter figure.

Our parents' closest friends were Sandy and Hilda who came around to play cards. Sandy was something on the wharves, clerical, I think, for he was slight and stooped, an indoor man. I liked Sandy because he chatted to me as Dad never did. But ever since, in these long decades in between, I can remember only one thing he said. "Your father is a very fine man. He is highly respected on the wharves because he is always fair." It conveyed a picture of our Dad in some undefined position, out there in the open air, dealing justly with all.

Once, in London, a memory stirred in me. Rob, a younger man I worked with for a time at the Beeb, had not long before come down from Cambridge – and surprised me when one day he talked of his grandfather who had been a day labourer on the London docks. Rob too had been brought up on family legends. Of all the cruelties practised on wharfies in his grandfather's time the worst was the one at the very source of their employment. They had no real, regular job; turned up in the dark early hours every morning, each the other's potential enemy or at least rival for whatever jobs were available. They lived literally from day to day. If they worked their families would eat

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that night and maybe the following morning – but nobody knew what tomorrow or any later day would bring. The pay was not enough for any long-range or even short-term planning. It was a struggle to sustain any kind of life beyond the most basic and immediate needs. Reith would have been in his element.

Rob's tale was forgotten. Only now, with McLeavy's article describing exactly such conditions in Australia have I remembered it and been doubly shocked for that article related to the 1880s and nineties. The conditions Rob had described were extant in Britain up to the Second World War when trade unions knew their strength and did battle for their members. Reading McLeavy I thought suddenly of Sandy's words to the child I was: "Your father is always fair." And a meaning in these words, which as a child I couldn't have grasped, belatedly struck home. My father's new job, had it been as a kind of foreman choosing the men for each day's work, that he had been judged fair? A specific possibility gave him a real context at last.

If that had not been his position of course I wish it was, for retrospectively I grasp or guess why 'fairness' was so important. It was not unknown for some unions to have corrupt officials, ready to be instructed by employers not to give work to 'trouble-makers' or themselves making their own arrangements directly with the men, expecting a cut of their daily wage in return for this favouritism. Fairness assuredly would have been prized. It may be sad, silly or pathetic that so late in the day I prize the possibility, even the possibility, that my Dad may have been a good man in a way I'd never suspected because not of an age to understand the circumstances. It was only Lyn McLeavy's piece which phrase by phrase forced me to think my way back to that distant childhood.

But much more devastating now was the thought of his death, which had always been described as a simple accident. McLeavy presented an alternative reading.

In the mid-1960s and early seventies a play of mine, half fictional and half drawn from my childhood and adolescence, had two productions, an apparently beautiful one which the Melbourne Theatre Company sent to the Festival of Perth, another, sadly mismanaged, in Sydney. It then disappeared and, despite in recent times some energetic rewriting and the efforts of dedicated supporters, has not been revived.

The childhood sections close with a scene in which an elder sister comes unexpectedly, early one morning, to the family home to tell her mother and teenage brother the bad news. "About sun-up, they said. It was on the deck, as the cargo was loaded. A crane came over carrying a sling, big lengths of timber. The rope broke. The whole load came down on him, he was knocked thirty feet down into the hold. They rushed him to hospital. They said his ribs were pushed up into his heart." A silence and then she adds in case they haven't quite understood: "Dad's dead."

It had been told, though not to me until much later, with exactly those details coming out in that way. (I was not a teenager as depicted in the play but a child of nine.) All that was ever said then in my hearing was that there had been an accident. Seven months later Mum was taken by night to the same hospital where in the small hours she died of what now would be called an aneurism (embolism?) but then was dubbed a "floating clot to the brain". I went to live with my eldest sister and her husband. And the accidental death of my father was, in all our memories, just that, an unfortunate accident. As the long decades passed and life was busy, all-absorbing, I thought of it less and less.

And then came McLeavy and this detail of early union days: "Everything had to be fought for. Many disputes were over unsafe gear which could lead to death and injuries. Shipowners resisted spending money or time on equipment, safety or working conditions." This was at the end of the nineteenth century but the article also tells us that the struggle for safer conditions was still going on up to the beginning of the Second World War – which began a few years after my father was killed. I re-read this simple sentence – "Many disputes were over unsafe gear which could lead to death and injuries" – and remembered the words: "the sling broke" – and put the magazine down as the implications hit me. Absurd so long afterwards to make such a connection, to feel guilty for never having grasped or guessed at this possibility long before, to wonder if the adults in the family knew the implications at the time and thought a nine-year-old wouldn't, and shouldn't be asked to, understand . . . ?

I never did cry at my father's death. He'd been so old and remote from me. I knew I'd miss him, his strong quiet presence, and there'd be regret that we hadn't been closer. A neighbour commented to my mother on my dry-eyed response: "Kids of that age are too young to understand." This my nine-year-old self rejected silently but furiously. *Of course* I understood but also understood that it was beyond

my – or their – capacity to do anything about it. The family way of dealing with troubles imposed on us a certain stoicism. The nine-year-old was simply conducting himself as expected.

It would make a neat ending to say that when over half a century later I read McLeavy's words – and realized at least the possibility of their relevance to that long-gone death – I at last shed tears. Maybe the eyes did blur a little but the main emotion was sheer bloody-minded anger, at the possibility that a cruel negligence caused such deaths.

There followed – instantly and it seemed to me logically – anger too at the lazy and in some quarters callous acceptance of our present resurgence of naked nineteenth-century capitalism, greedy, ruthless, callous, breaking down every hard-won gain in 'ordinary' people's working lives and even now putting those lives at risk. Worst of insults, the system is now sold to us as a necessary 'globalism' – for which read 'Americanization'. We went through it all in Britain in the Thatcher years and came home to watch it unfolding all over again in this paradise.

But mildly joke that the only reason six-year-olds are not being sent down the mines is that all the mines have been closed and you're howled down for living in the past. Quote media reports of Asian women and their children, doing piece-work at home from almost sun-up to sundown for the legendary pittance, and this for some of the most fashionable and wealthy companies on earth, and you'll hear someone murmur those familiar words 'trickle down' . . . except that by the time it does the Asian woman will be dead and her daughter still does the work with *her* little helper and though the fees may have gone up they're still way below what the companies can afford and any self-respecting middle-class office worker would take for granted.

There are signs that resistance is spreading but too many people are enjoying too much economic power and the perks that go with it for the present structures to be readily dismantled. Meanwhile perceptions, emotions and behaviours coarsen as the rapacities now entrenched – and expected as normal business procedures – have spread cancerously through the body politic. This big con sells 'globalism' as the great elixir when, for the bulk of the population, it's the same old snake-oil. And snake-oil doesn't trickle. Eventually enough of us will choke on it and spit it out, preferably in the eye of those so benevolently dishing it out to us. And then may come . . . well, probably no revolution but a gradual return to a society with some measure of fairness, balance and decency.

Living and working in Perth, the thought of going to an Anzac Day ceremony never crossed my mind. Many young people were not 'cynical', as P.M. Howard keeps saying about that era, simply sceptical and questioning of this 'dwelling on the past'.

Alan Seymour's best-known literary work is One Day of the Year, *a widely-taught and studied play about ANZAC Day and one which had a significant impact on most of the present* overland *editorial team.*

Drowning Ephemeral

Five after Midnight
we gave in
decided it was time
to drift home

We were thrown out
of Rosies, Shooters, the Party
we found no-one and nothing
amongst the neon, the starlight
the spirit of Rock'n'Roll

Floating past the Hard Rock
electric brown guitar
whisky flavoured nostalgia
we wonder if this city
ever had a soul

Floating past the Night Owl
twenty-four hours
soft-drink and porn
we wonder where this city
keeps its lost ghosts

Floating past the Pink Poodle
glowing pink guard dog
watching over the roadside
we wonder where this city
keeps its stories

Under the shifting lights of Jupiter's
Five lights
rolling down the sloped casino roof
we parted ways
half-drunk, lost

The city's current pulled me southwards
Through Broadbeach
Cafe's society at its most oblivious
Through Nobby's Beach
The Tuscan fortress/apartments of Magic Mountain

Through Burleigh Heads
The park at twilight filled with the chatter of lorikeets

The city pulled me south
past white crosses
picketed into the earth
Jamie's friend Alex
crossing at the wrong place
after the time of his life

Past houses I used to know
beat up and windows broken
needle marks
up a tanned coast arm

Past a bridge
views of forested hills, expensive homes
Currumbin beachfront from the railing
my friend Brian tried to fly here
He knew that he couldn't

Southwards
as far south in this city that I know
lying on a hilltop
watching rolling beach
mangroves
the electronic lighthouse
beaming radio waves instead of light

Daylight isn't far off
the skyline will turn red in an hour
the sun will come to greet this tourist city
for another day

It's my five thousand
one hundred and thirteenth morning
spent in this city

It's an old friend
leaving with daylight

Peter Ball

Transparency

At the Alannah Hill sale I lure him into
the change-room to see me in my fairy
dress of transparent layers, pink and green,
then let it fall away to my birthday suit and
behind his glasses he licks my body and
we have a shared interest since he sells
old dresses. He gives me a pair of 70s
baby-pink hot-pants to sport over
Levante cobweb tights and I find myself
collecting more pinks: a 60s lurex glitter-babe
skirt, a crocheted skirt, an old-style collar
cardigan, a fuchsia leather handbag with
ochre trim and satin purse chained inside,
and a Singapore orchid pendant. Pink is
the colour of affection. I glow parade
in his shop in an apricot dress with matching
silk wrap, a red suit made from My-Last,
a lime-checked skirt with orange-spot sash,
and a silver slip-dress with stay-up lace-top
stockings. When he decides I am too high-
maintenance, that he cannot imagine me
with plaster on my hands, I visit. He cannot
resist me in a curious dress, beads and body-tight –
has to touch, "Where did you get it? How much?"
And we close the shop, lay out an Astrakhan fur coat
on the change-room floor in front of Maxfield
Parrish's *Daybreak*. We use the mirror to glance
at bad angels. He looks like my granddad. I
dress like his mother when young. His skin
is a well-kept fabric – a good accessory. His
friend batters at the glass shop-door. There
must be suspect rhythmic shadows. "Don't
answer," I say. "I have to," he says and zips
himself up. "That coat got sold the next day,"
he tells me. "Every time we use the change-room
I make more sales," he says. "It's the smell of sex,
the musk of you." Now, months later, when we
can easily not touch, he suggests, "I want to
taste you. I'm closing the shop." I twirl in a 60s
orange silk coat with crocodile brown shoes and
handbag – 50s skins carried by kept women
hinting at fierce creatures. We carry the high
chair to the change-room. Some girls start
knocking on the door as my green-eyed boy goes
down. "You taste of peaches," he says. The girls
get louder. They do not stop. "They are going to
break the glass," he says. I pull on my skirt,
stockings and shoes. I let in the girls and they
briefly inspect a bag while I turn to liquid and he
savours the smell on his breath. Watching the
nightcloud, waiting to close, thinking of a cigarette
while I am distracted; before an arm-in-arm walk to
the tramstop past the hooked-up lights in the trees

Ashlley Morgan-Shae

Duck Reach

From the balcony of a bluestone
miner's cottage overlooking
the catastrophic wreckage
of the Duck Reach hydroelectric
disaster, he sees a man like him
at the edge, strumming a guitar,
a song he knew, could play, his song.
It is him he sees there, looking
down upon himself all sweaty
with jogging on the precipice
of another flood, frozen in a blink
of his own history before he turns
and flees, before he wakes.

Mark O'Flynn

Popsical poem

Men should be dicks on
sticks; they should be
available across the
counter at any
convenience store

Men should be
milky bar kids –
quick on the draw
with a friendly
aftertaste and pick
up the wrappers

Men should be
golden gaytimes
sporting all manner
of charms for hot day
tricks – yummy-nut
chocky boys for
long tongue slicks

Ashlley Morgan-Shae

Lament

Keren Heenan

The morning of the day that Armstrong walked on the moon, my father danced a jig on the kitchen table and my brother built a model Apollo from toilet rolls and foil. My mother cooked a pancake and saw the face of Jesus on it and fell to the floor crying, "Prophesy, prophesy. Turn back. Your footsteps are not for that place."

My brother frowned over his work, his fingers sticky with glue and my father downed a whiskey neat to herald in the new age.

"Profanity," my mother wept.

"Insanity," my father said. "It's the Man in the Moon," and he lifted the pale pancake to the light, taking a bite.

My mother shrieked and took it from his hands. "There is no man in the moon, fool."

Watching from the doorway, I saw the dark contours of the pancake form the shape of a conch shell, its curved lines drawing me in to secret, silent spaces where the rush of waves drowns out the things that make no sense.

My silence is a wall – sheer, thick, impenetrable. My silence has no doors.

At school this silence is no longer enigma. My teacher pats my head and neither asks questions nor waits for words. He has ceased the expansive gestures with his hands as if he thought my ears had been captive to the same immutable wall as my tongue.

We watched the moon-landing on television. Crowded into an airless classroom, the breath of anticipation made the room strangely warm in July. We were told there is no atmosphere on the moon;

all is deathly quiet – as quiet as a stone – no trembling, no wind to stir the surface. "Imagine Earthrise from the moon," our teacher said, his eyes bright and feverish. I remembered the slow ascent of the moon over a smooth, bald hill and into a purple sky.

I write notes to my mother. She crushes them and strokes my throat. "Speak to me, child of mine," she says, the paper a pellet of grief in her hand.

That night my mother saw thin, black shapes loping along the crest of the hill. "Demons," she cried, and held her fist to her breast.

Others saw rotating discs of light in the night sky. My mother saw angels; pale and diaphanous with wings of gold. And behind, driving them onward and out of sight, her demons, wielding whips. She knelt and clung to me, our cheeks pressed like two palms in prayer. "Speak to me, child," she whispered. "Tell me what mystery is in your head. Speak to me. When will you speak to me?"

The levee will not break in the river of my words.

Long after dark the rain fell, soft and sibilant – an endless rustling of silk. My bleeding began that night; a red-brown stain so unlike blood, and a curious pulling like the seawater sucking at the sand around my feet. My mother celebrated with red candles and soft prayers, and kept my father and brother away from the bathroom and the bucket of stained, soaking underwear.

My brother lit fire crackers under his Apollo and sent it to the Heavens in a shower of sparks. My mother cut her hand in fright at the explosion and, fearing the end of the world, buried my head in her breast and wept into my hair.

My father drank whiskey neat, then walked over the paddocks to a neighbour's, his rifle slung over his shoulder and the whiskey flask in his back pocket.

My mother's demons ran along the ledge of her mind. "Speak to me, child," she said, stroking my cheek. "Tell me what world you live in, for I'm losing mine."

My world sings in A Minor – a great low moaning that sweeps around me wrapping me in gauze.

My heart fluttered like a trapped bird in the cage of my ribs.

I tried to hum to my mother, but my throat tightened and the thrum was in my head.

My mother cooked a pancake and saw on it the scarred face of the moon. "A new scar," she said. "The scar of heavy feet." She smiled then, a sad but devious smile. "They left something else behind. A little bit of their souls. The price they pay for plundering the mystery."

Clouds of time scurry overhead, but my world is safe, sacred, unchallenged. They no longer expect me to be part of the world my mother inhabits like a fish far from water. "Speak to me, child," she says softly, more out of habit now. Her eyes watch the ripples in my throat as I try to hum the lament of my world. Her eyes grow wide. She places her hand over my throat suddenly and whispers, "Hush." She shakes her head. "Hush, child."

fiction

Her Father's Watch

m.p. french

HOW SHE FOUND an old watch in a tool-bag that had belonged to her father's dead uncle who was a cabinet-maker and when he died her father inherited all his tools and a grandfather clock and furniture that he'd made, [*incomplete sentence*]

and thought that she could get it repaired with a thin rose-gold band [*gr: a rose-gold band won't 'repair' anything*]. When she asked her mother, when her mother asks her, when she tells her mother she found it and was thinking of getting it repaired . . . but it's none of her mother's business, she's just answering her question . . . Well, when she's in the shower later shaving her legs her father drops his watch down on the end of her bed and calls:

"Here. I've left my watch on your bed. You can use it."

She cuts herself on the back of her right knee. It doesn't hurt (but later it will sting) and the blood and soap run down her calf and heel. "Why the fuck had he brought down his watch, and could he see that I was shaving through the shower screen? Could he see?" She looks down at her body and figures, even if he did, there's nothing worth seeing. No breasts to speak of, too much hair, gangly posture – she ain't no supermodel, that's for sure. But she's fuming that, having answered her mother (who should have been minding her own fucking business) that she's *thinking* of getting it repaired, her mother's gone back and told the father that Emma wants a watch and the father thinks it's urgent and brings his watch down straight away. It's a big man's watch with the fat man's band of gold-plated stainless steel with most of the gold-plating worn off [*or is it electroplating?*]: a "CYMA *navystar* CYMA*FLEX* (Swiss Made)". But she's fuming so much that, in the shower, she's tempted to scratch herself, to tear at her skin to punish herself for being so stupid as to open her mouth. She has a history of this. She grits her teeth and drags her nails across her belly and leaves four red stripes, but she doesn't do anything more than that. Everything stays bottled up inside. Why the fuck would they give her the man's watch? She wanted a delicate girl's watch. Nice and thin. Just a bracelet.

She has grown up with the tribe and is now one of them. She wears her hair in two long plaits, has a fine headband, one small feather in the band (crow) and three smaller feathers in the end of each plait (martin). She is very quiet. She sits very straight on the edge of a precipice overlooking a green valley in which the tribe's lodges stand. From here she can see the rays of the Great Spirit angling in through the clouds; there are buffalo running in the distance, being chased by mounted braves; smoke is coiling up from some of the lodges where the other tribespeople are going about their business. Not far from her there is a bare tree whose trunk and branches are black and angular. Perched in the tree is a crow, watching over her. The crow in the tree is the medicine man of the tribe and she is his acolyte. His instruction is non-verbal. It is all to do with light and dark, and colour and air and fire and water and earth in that order.

[*What the fuck was that?*]

How after the shower she, naked, tries the watch on, looks at it on her arm (rolls her wrist); looks at it on her arm in the mirror (rolls her wrist) and, up from the watch, at her hair, at the four red stripes across

her belly, at her none-to-speak-of breasts, her lank hair [*Lanky go home!*], her lips (none to speak of), hips; turns to look at the shape of her bum (hair she couldn't reach), sees the cut on the back of her knee (half-inch straight red); reaches down, sees the watch slip down her wrist to her hand, looks at it (in the mirror), touches the cut. It stings.

And the watch band is too long for her wrist. But part of her decides she might like it. It might be nice. Ticking bangle sort of thing. She has nothing else of her father's. This might be the only thing. And besides, it makes her look thinner. So she takes it off and winds it and sets its time and stands it on her big quartz crystal to be cleansed and made lucky or something. She gets dressed without looking at herself – ugly bitch. You fucking ugly bitch, she thinks. Why couldn't they leave her alone. She didn't ask for it.

Next morning the watch has stopped at ten past seven and she's running late. How she purses her lips when she sees that and now [*oh HOW she writes these ungrammatical paras*] she's going to have to ask to get *that* repaired and she didn't even want it and might as well repair the dead uncle's watch [*gonna hafta get the damn prose repaired first*] instead, but she's so late – wishing she'd torn herself to pieces yesterday – it's going to be a bad day she decides and decides maybe to blow off the first class and pop in and see Amelia. Just to see her, just to see how she is. Just for the smile and maybe a hug is all she needs to get through the day. So she winds the watch again and sets its time again and puts it back on the crystal again and in the car outside Amelia's she checks her makeup (she has to put it on in the car so her parents don't know – otherwise they'd be fucking asking about that). But she's got on her makeup and puckers to see that it's right; wide-eyed turns her head to the side to check her eyes; winks and kisses herself. Amelia will be so surprised. She's grinning to herself, maybe even have a cup of breakfast tea, still plenty of time before class.

Amelia's husband's car is not in the driveway so it's safe to go in – he's at work – oh, but they haven't been doing anything wrong, nothing like that. But as she approaches all the blinds are drawn and she starts to feel uneasy; that Amelia could still be asleep or in the shower, but she's in there now and she could be in the kitchen [*imprecise pronouns*] so she knocks on the door (gently, but the knocker makes a loud bang). There is no answer. She can hear a muffled television (Amelia doesn't watch television – certainly not at ten in the morning) and so waits. But she's uneasy. Something's wrong. She hears the bare feet on Amy's floor. The door opens and it's Amy's son. She swears to herself: fucking school holidays – she forgot.

"Uh, hi," she says. "Is Amelia home?"

What's troubling her is the boy is only wearing shorts and is so brown and has flawless skin. Oh he's gorgeous. And she's embarrassed at his unself-consciousness. When she gets to think about it she'll also be jealous. "Oh, I think she's in the shower."

"Oh. Well. It's just she's got a couple of my books and I was on my way past and thought I could, I just, well, thought I could save her . . ."

"Does she know you're coming?"

"No, no. Sorry. I just thought . . ."

(Scratching his belly): "Do you know where they are?"

"Oh no. Sorry. I don't um look, don't worry about it. I was just – just on my way past. It's no trouble," and she's going and gone. On the way out already cursing herself for being so stupid, furious tears at the corners of her eyes. She gets back in her car. Stupid bitch. Stupid stupid bitch. How she smears her makeup off, sniffing, spits on a tissue and wipes clean her face. He was so at ease. She's never that at ease with herself. Ever.

She is sad because she is lonely. She misses her own people (the puritan pilgrims). She is not going to find a partner and a lover in the tribe as she is destined to be the next shaman and her business is art and perception and magic and healing (of course). So she is unhappy. But she is also serene. She sees the world calmly, and in her serenity she has great beauty. In her sadness there is great beauty. And she sits and sits with an ache inside for her lost and dead and betrayed past.

How about a week later when she screws up the courage to mention to her father that the watch isn't working and he says "lemme see" and he winds it just like she did, and it's working just as it apparently did for her, and he slips it onto his arm (she wears it on her right wrist, he puts it on his left). And six hours later it hasn't even slowed. Next morning he gives it back still working and she finally has her watch (not now without the embarrassment that he thinks she's a big stupido – thinks she can't even wind a fucking watch for Christ's sake!). Turns out he had it repaired about five years ago and it's sat in his drawer ever since so it just needed to be wound up tight a few times until it got wound up again, as it were.

And when he gives it back to her it's so warm from his arm that she slips it straight on and tells herself she'll never let it go cold again. So for the rest of her life the watch will be warm with the life of her father – she's just maintaining his warmth – but as long as she has it with her she'll have him – warm. On the back is engraved "*S.O.P. 25.2.59*". Twenty-first birthday present so he's sixty-one now [*incomplete sentence*] still going strong. At night she puts it under her pillow to keep it warm; wraps it in her clothes when she's in the shower (which is a little too often). Over the coming weeks he offers to shorten the band for her so it fits. She says no I like it this way. He says it will only take a second. She says what part of no don't you understand thanks dad no thanks no thank you thanks. So a week or so later her mother asks if she wants to give her the watch so she can get her father to shorten the band [*imprecise pronouns*]. She says no [*Who?*]. So she got the watch with the too-long band and it's warm and she wears it always superstitiously.

Crow: Words are just silent sounds. All silence is words. Trees are words. Trees are the living manifestation of the four elements. Thus words are the manifestation of the four elements – silent sounds. Her mind. No speech.

[*Huh?*]

How that day she bought a painting and when the artist bent over the desk to sign/confirm the sale-sheet details she saw her breast hanging loosely inside her top [*Whose bbbreast? Imprecise pronouns.*] and was so frightened by/of herself that she turned away and stared hard at the painting as if transfixed but actually she wasn't seeing anything at all. Wasn't hearing anything at all. Gritting her teeth hard.

The artist had hacked off all her hair with a big pair of scissors – the only acceptable form of self-mutilation (other than the painting, and cutting fingernails, shaving/waxing – but she didn't do either of these) and she couldn't do anything else what with the launch coming up and Emma knew what it was like: resting her right hand on her belly over the four red stripes, gently massaging. The artist looks up from the desk and says, "Nice watch."

Emma blushes, having to look back at her, but she looks down and to the watch. "Oh, thanks. It's my fathers" [*apostrophe*].

The artist comes over and lifts her hand from her belly. Her fingers are cool and soft (always moisturized after painting), lifting her arm to look more closely at the watch. She feels her breath on her hand. It gives her goosebumps. She shivers and the artist notices, looking up from the watch. Their faces are very close. The artist smiles at her (there is a half-sadness in the artist's eyes). "I hope you like the painting." Emma wants to burst into tears. She's so happy.

"Would you like to get a coffee?" the artist asks. She nods. The artist looks back at the watch, still holding her hand. "I love your watch."

"It's my fathers [*apostrophe*]. So do I."

As they walk out to find a cafe the artist says to her, "You should get the band shortened so it fits properly."

Soon she too will shape-change but she's awaiting the spirit form to choose her. The wind from down in the green valley caresses her face. It brings her the scent of smoke and pollen and cooking meat; the sounds of the valley all translated into breeze and the breeze temperature. It is cool, but its coolness makes

her skin feel warmer. She feels herself waver. She feels herself. She is defined by air and smoke and smell.

On the cliff edge there is only the crow and the tree. Stunted, black, angular, clutching the edge of the precipice – she has become tree. She has become word. Crow wipes his beak on one of her branches; on one of her plaits.

How when her father died she sat with him the whole night thinking about how he'd sat with his dying uncle all those years ago and she still has the uncle's fucking broken watch and never got it repaired. Never needed to. How she sat with him all night, listening to his breathing become shallower and shallower, listening to the gaps between inhalations become longer; so long that she thought he was gone. Then another sudden, almost a sharp intake [*incomplete sentence*]. A sob. Another sob of life, a lingering. A dalliance between the two worlds (like meeting the artist). How then another and then another and so on until finally a deep last breath close on the heels of the preceding sob. A deep deep last breath; no exhalation, just the draining of air out of the lungs. A gravity sigh and then the rattle. Crossing over to the fanfare of a gurgle, there he goes.

It was 7.10 a.m. The minute hand pointing towards the sun as it stabbed over the winter horizon, gleaming off the faded gold [*gr: the horizon can't gleam off anything*].

She didn't move; sat stone still on the front edge of her chair as if on the edge of the precipice of the valley over which her father had flown. The watch didn't stop. It kept perfect time; felt cool against her wrist.

Self-published writers

Gail Cork, Manager, Literature, Australia Council for the Arts

SHOULD SELF-PUBLISHED writers be eligible to apply to the Literature Board for a grant? Resoundingly yes, according to Euan Mitchell (*overland* 161). The case he puts forward however does not tell the whole story.

As anyone will tell you, who has witnessed the gruelling five-day Literature Board meeting at which some 450–500 applications from writers are assessed each year, the Board can ill afford any change to the guidelines which would see even more writers queueing for a grant. It is in order to keep the number of applications to a manageable level that eligibility to apply is currently restricted to those who have cleared that crucial hurdle in every new writer's career, namely having had their work selected for publication by a professional publisher. For those who have not yet reached that stage, the Board provides advice and development opportunities through its financial support to State Writers' Centres.

Contrary to Euan Mitchell's suggestion, 'professional' publication does not necessarily equate with 'commercial' publication, that is, unless he counts our struggling literary journals and tiny boutique imprints among those commercial publishers, driven by their "desire to make a quick buck with minimal risk". Writers can become eligible by having their work published in a wide range of professional outlets, including *overland* as it happens.

While it is true that publication by a professional publisher is no guarantee of literary merit, it does indicate to the Board that a work has been objectively recognized as publishable and has been through an editorial screening process. Exceptions notwithstanding, professional publication remains the most consistently reliable indicator that a work is at least competently edited, produced, distributed and promoted. No such minimum standards apply to self-published works.

The Board readily acknowledges the existence of some outstanding self-published books, Euan Mitchell's own novel, *Feral Tracks*, being among them. However, even Euan would surely concede that they remain very much the exception. Unfortunately, for several reasons, it is no simple task to open eligibility to some self-published writers while continuing to exclude others. On the other hand, the Board does not have the resources to deal with the volume of applications which would flow from opening eligiblity to all self-published writers.

Nor is it helpful to suggest that the exclusion of self-published writers constitutes discrimination. Using this principle, any writer excluded by the eligibility guidelines could level the same accusation at the Board. If Euan Mitchell himself really embraced such a fatuous argument, how would he appease those self-published writers excluded under his own proposal to limit elibigility to those who had sold 1000 copies? Why should self-published writers be the only ones whose eligibility hangs on the number of copies sold and/or a positive review? Isn't that discriminatory too? The devil of discrimination, you see, lurks in the detail of every articulation of eligibility.

The whole issue of eligibility is not the simple matter Euan Mitchell's article would have us believe. In determing the guidelines, the Literature Board has to grapple with logistical and equity issues which reach far beyond the question of sales figures and positive reviews. When limited resources demand a radical cull of grant contenders, tough decisions have to be made about where to erect the gates. Wherever the gates are placed, there will be those who feel themselves unfairly locked out.

Some of them, unfortunately, might be very good writers who, for whatever reason, have not yet succeeded in selling their work to a publisher and who cannot afford to self-publish. Others might be less worthy writers with the economic means to have published their own work and the nous to have sold 1000 copies. Which group is more deserving of support? More to the point, how does the Board open the gates just enough for all of the deserving to squeeze through without starting a stampede? This is the perpetual challenge facing the Board when it sets the eligibility guidelines.

For all the obvious reasons, it has long been the policy of the Literature Board that publication by a professional publisher best serves the interests of practising writers and readers. However the Board is not deaf to constructive feedback and is always willing to review its policies, longstanding or otherwise, in the light of changing times. The Board acknowledges that self-publication has shed some of the stigma it carried a decade ago and also that it is becoming an increasingly viable option for writers, particularly in marginal genres such as poetry. On that basis, the Board is currently reviewing the guidelines with a view to extending eligibility to a small number of self-published literary writers. Euan Mitchell is one of the interested parties who will be consulted in an effort to develop a solution which is both workable and fair to all. With all the facts at hand, Euan may find it a little more complex than he thought.

Working Class Poets

Sarah Attfield

> *A whole class, like whole regions, can be seen as neglected. The implication of its marginality or, as often, its inferiority of status or interest, is rejected by deliberate selection and emphasis.*
>
> Raymond Williams

IT'S PROBABLY REALLY NAFF to respond to a negative review of your own work, but call it sour grapes, preciousness, whatever, I felt I had to reply to Kerry Leves' review of my book *Hope in Hell* in *overland* 162. I realise that not everyone has to like what I write, but I do expect poetry to be reviewed without the critic's personal biases or ignorance showing too much. What fired me up was that Leves' review pretty much serves as an example of the kind of attitudes presented by the middle class literary establishment towards working class poetry. And let's face it – *overland* certainly is part of that establishment, at least as far as selection of poetry published and supported goes.

Working class poets often find their work described (by middle class critics) as unsophisticated, unliterary, simplistic, lacking in metaphor, images and therefore not really 'poetry'. It may be useful for highlighting certain social concerns, but ultimately falls into the category of propaganda – didactic message writing that is better off in publications like *Green Left Weekly*, not literary magazines.

Leves describes my poetry as "material" – displaying an apparent rejection of the book as poetry. He suggests it might work well if workshopped by a filmmaker such as Mike Leigh. It seems as though working class life is a good subject for film (directed by a middle class director) but not for poetry. I quite like Leigh's films, though for authenticity I prefer Ken Loach – less of the whimsical stuff. And this is where Leves misses the point. The poems in my book (and those of other working class poets like Geoff Goodfellow and Mick Searles) are about real life. *Real* working class people and some of the emotions they experience through their daily lives, whether it be despair, anger, apathy, depression or hope and pleasure. These are snapshots of characters of course – it wasn't written as a realist epic novel – it's condensed into vignettes with the intention of demonstrating that working class experience *is* a proper subject for poetry, along with everything else.

I get the impression that Leves thinks I've made it all up, that I've been watching too much of *The Bill*, but he's completely wrong. I know these characters – they are more than "social types". They exist; I'm one of them. The photo on the front cover, Kerry – that's the block of flats I grew up in. My mother still lives on the same estate; she's been there for thirty-three years. There's nothing "wistful" about this working class life. It really is a tough, unrelenting grind for many, with moments of joy in the 'small' pleasures of life and a deep sense of hope and promise in things getting better.

Amid the violence and despair there is the bond of family and community – the pitching in to help each other, the efforts to understand each other's circumstances.

It's a culture that I'm sure Leves had no comprehension of, and why should he? I don't know what it's like to grow up as an Aboriginal person in Australia, but when I read poetry written by Aboriginal poets I try to understand life from their particular perspective. Although my poetry is set in London, the experiences of the characters (with some changes in language) could easily be transported to housing commission flats and estates in Australia. So, you don't need to be in possession of 'prescribed sympathies', you just need the ability to see things from a different point of view. Isn't that what poetry is about?

Leves condescends that there are "moments of poetry" in my book and refers to a poem about greyhound racing. What makes the rest of it un-poetry? It certainly isn't prose fiction as far as I can tell. Is it because I haven't used metaphor? Frankly, there isn't much place for metaphor when describing working class life. The working class poet doesn't necessarily want to use constructed metaphor to portray the raw reality of working class experience. It can become mere euphemism – assisting in rendering us invisible when we're trying hard to let you know what the reality looks like. I'm not going to shroud details of aggression, frustration and hatred in metaphors. I want the reader to share the direct experience of the characters and of me, the writer. And anyway, metaphor is only one poetic device. The same goes for images. I think the problem is that critics like Leves just refuse to recognize images such as "unmuzzled pitbulls" or "piss puddles in the lift" as appropriate for poetry. These are things we prefer not to view, both literally and poetically.

It is extremely frustrating that the working class poet in Australia is constantly having to prove to middle class critics, editors, publishers, academics, that the working class exist, never mind that we also write poetry. And when they do come across our work, we find it's dismissed because it doesn't fit in with established middle class notions of quality and is often rejected as not poetry at all. There appears to be a denial that poetry can be written in working class language and that it can communicate, touch and influence as poetry should, or that working class poets can write about work or unemployment, poverty or everyday life, the kind of daily activity to which many Australians can relate. This can all be poetry, and if it's 'material' then so is the Australian landscape, self-reflection, abstract notions – yet this kind of 'material' somehow seems acceptable to the middle class establishment. And it's interesting how criticisms levelled at working class poetry have also been used to dismiss Aboriginal poetry or migrant poetry (naive, too political, lacking in aesthetics, misuse of 'standard' English etc).

I'm sure by now Kerry Leves and many other readers will be thinking of chips on shoulders and whinging working class – I'm used to that reaction. Working class people who dare to suggest that our middle class contemporaries are not as understanding as they should be are often said to be whinging. We believe we're expressing our opinion in the same way you would if you felt that you (or a group you supported) were being marginalized. If it was just one negative review of one book of poetry then it probably wouldn't matter, but I'm writing this in regard to the general attitude towards working class poetry from middle class critics who try to push us further to the margins. It's funny, but when we perform or read our poetry, people like it. Middle class and working class people read and buy it, but it's almost as if the middle class literary establishment is afraid to acknowledge us. Maybe there's a poetic revolution in the making and I guess that would be a scary thought for many. But we're just interested in a bit of respect and equal opportunity. We believe there's room for poetry that represents the people and environment in all its diversity but critics like Leves seem to be against this kind of inclusion.

Maybe if Leves spent a few days on the estate I grew up on, or went for a walk around Semaphore with Geoff Goodfellow, or popped into the housing commission flats of Melbourne and Sydney, he might understand that working class life can be poetry, not always pretty maybe, but it's poetry that has a right to be made.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Sarah Attfield was invited to respond at length to Kerry Leves' review as a way of leading into our forthcoming special feature on Australian working class poetry. Pam Brown, overland*'s poetry editor, has written the following reply to Attfield. Kerry Leves will also be given an opportunity to respond, as will anyone who feels they have something to contribute to the debate.*

Pam Brown

SARAH ATTFIELD's response to Kerry Leves' succinct review-note reads as a disproportionate reaction. It also seems to use his reasonable (although brief and therefore undeveloped) critique as a platform to air a personal theory or issue that was not raised in the review.

She expects poetry to be reviewed "without the critic's personal bias or ignorance showing too much". Kerry Leves' short review displays neither bias nor ignorance. He skilfully uses a well-known technique of comparative literature in talking about her poems in terms of contemporary UK 'realist' movies. Her book, after all, is located in the same territory and uses the same, yes, "material". Her book's title *Hope in Hell* also easily echoes Mike Leigh's film *High Hopes*. Whether the choice of filmmaker (Leigh or Loach) suits the reviewee's particular tastes is probably an unreasonable expectation on her part given that the genre comparison seems apt.

As the poetry editor I must refute Sarah's suggestion that "the selection of poetry published and supported" is part of "the middle-class literary establishment". The poetry I choose for *overland* is selected neither on the basis of "class" nor "literary establishment". As well as work from generally well-known poets, I quite often select from poets who are completely unknown to me. Often I select work that is, in my opinion, more conservative or more radical than my own poetry. The point being that I keep the prospective readers in mind and try to choose work that, from my experience of over more than thirty years as a practising poet, I think is worth publishing. I would also say that, contrary to Sarah's thinking that *overland* is part of a "middle-class literary establishment" it is in fact practically the only literary magazine that would give her and like-minded poets the space to air their complaints.

I think that to say, as Sarah does, that metaphor is unnecessary to working class poetry is limiting and deprives any poetic aspirant of hope of writing. To me it seems condescending to both audience and any writing community. Why make such restrictions on how to write? Why not aim higher than that?

I'm also sceptical that, as Sarah reckons, there's a poetic revolution afoot. But if that *is* her belief and if she is fortunate enough to continue having her work critically reviewed then, with respect, I'd advise that she steel herself in readiness to receive sometimes constructive and sometimes unfair criticism and accept it with an alert graciousness and fiery interest that might fuel and develop an energetic poetry.

Dobberwatch

Ian Syson

FURTHER TO *OVERLAND*'s recent revelations on ASIO dobbers, I've been doing a bit more digging in the Archives in Canberra; and building a profile on Peter Ryan, Manning Clark's publisher and one-time Melbourne University Labor Club member. I have identified four Ryan informees and a picture of a developing relationship between Ryan and ASIO.

Interestingly, Ryan himself was under ASIO surveillance in the early 1950s. As late as 10 April 1953 an ASIO operative was "not able to give a clearance" to Ryan because of his left-wing associations. By the following year things had changed dramatically. On 10 September 1954 it was recorded that "In view of the information now held . . . it is considered that he should now be reassessed, and it is considered that he no longer presents a security risk". *Overland* readers might remember (from issue no. 155) that Ryan was interviewed by ASIO on 28 July 1954 during which he gave information about a number of academics, including Max Crawford.

The records also reveal that in 1956 Ryan participated in the ASIO vetting of Kelson Arnold (already admitted by Ryan to Tony Stephens in the *Sydney Morning Herald*) and Harry Hyamson. It appears that

Ryan's assistance to ASIO was such that "he was cleared to records level by Headquarters" on 30 August 1957. While it is not clear what this means there is a definite sense in the relevant memo that Ryan's status within ASIO was elevated at this point.

Recently released material has also helped to fill in a blank space about the revelation in *overland* 158 that Ryan had participated in a "vetting action" on 6 October 1960. It indicates that he gave information on a Gerard Ottmar Gutman (a Dunera Boy). Ryan discussed Gutman's employment history, his political development and his character.

It remains to be seen what else we can uncover and what the press that so harassed Manning Clark on skimpier evidence will make of this story. We would appreciate any feedback readers might have to offer.

What You Think 2001

WE WERE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED to get a twenty per cent response rate to our recent questionnaire. Most responded positively to what they saw as recent changes to the magazine, some referring to a "new direction", others believing we were "returning" to an older spirit. A few seemed to regret recent developments, believing we were "aggressive", "blokey", "too biased" or "ultra-left". Some directly contradicted others: too left-wing; not left-wing enough; too academic; not theoretical enough; too much poetry; not enough poetry, etc.

These sorts of response were to be expected. Some of the things we learnt were that the great majority of our subscribers listen to ABC radio, a surprising 63 per cent read the poetry and 83 per cent nominated reviews as an aspect of the magazine they enjoy.

This was in fact the second of such surveys. Stephen Murray-Smith's assessment of the first was published in issue no. 19, 1960–61 (see facsimile on right). Curiously, many of the responses are similar despite forty years having lapsed.

This suggests that we are doing something right for a number of our readership, which is pleasing. But the question remains about how to build our readership for future security. Significantly, the most important social issue facing Australia for our subscribers is Reconciliation (followed by environmental and social justice concerns). The present issue is an immediate response to that. So keep the feedback coming.

P.S. The winner of the $250 book voucher was Vincent O'Donnell of Melbourne.

What You Think

The Overland questionnaire in our last issue scored 31 replies, which, as these things go, is pretty good. Of course it's true that there will be a high proportion of Overland's keenest readers among those replying to any such questionnaire, and hence recommendations, for instance about raising the price of the magazine, have to be treated with caution. The majority of respondents advocated the lifting of the price of Overland to 4/-. but it's hard for us to take any such action without thinking carefully about its likely effect on our other three or four thousand readers.

In order of first preferences, stories were the most popular item, followed by feature articles and, some way behind, poetry. I was surprised to find that Swag is more popular than I would have expected, and overseas items and news notes less popular. General satisfaction seem to be expressed with illustrations and layout.

Among individual comments received were: "Need more concentration on urban Australia"; "Why don't you have an annual gathering of subscribers in each State?"; "I dislike superficial armchair sociologists"; "I particularly dislike occasional attempts to be two-sided"; "I want less softness and orthodoxy in Overland, and higher intellectual standards in sociological analysis"; "How can you expect a Government grant when so many articles are anti-Government?"; "I particularly dislike any suggestion of political propaganda"; "Is Russian the only foreign literature worth keeping up with constantly?"; "Keep Overland just as it is"; "I suggest more rugged pragmatism, less weak-kneed wishfulness"; "I particularly dislike 'patter' about literature"; "We need more big items, and good long discussions of 'think' problems"; "Cheers to you for coming to grips with issues no-one else has the guts to touch."

Individual Overland writers singled out for repeated praise were David Martin, Noel Macainsh, John Manifold, Ian Turner, A. A. Phillips, John Morrison, Laurence Collinson, David Forrest, Gordon Adler. Vane Lindesay's drawings were also repeatedly commended.

We would like to thank all those who took the trouble to reply, and to assure them that their ideas will be closely looked into. While it's true that in any such tasting of opinion there will be a bewildering variety of loves and hates, at the same time I believe that a successful magazine cannot be produced unless nearly every reader can get something from say sixty per cent. of each issue. Thus these comments (and further comments we hope readers will continue to send us) play an important part in our plans. This is not to say, of course, that Overland will be produced on the basis of a popular vote of its readers, for a magazine must strive to lead rather than to follow. Even if it often makes mistakes.

S.M.S.

Absence Asia

What's Wrong with Australian Poetry?

Ouyang Yu

AFTER 212 YEARS since the 'founding' of Australia, is there a single line, indeed a single word, of poetry written by an Australian poet of Asian origin collected in an anthology of Australian poetry?

The answer is a resounding no.

Before I went to my panel at the Melbourne Writers' Festival last year, I wandered into Readings Bookshop in Carlton. As usual, I found myself standing before the poetry section, first involuntarily looking for my own books, finding none, then moving on to other people's books until I found myself thumbing through the pages of recently published anthologies of Australian poetry.

The first I perused was *Australian Verse: an Oxford Anthology*, edited by John Leonard. No Asian-Australian poets there. The second was *Penguin Book of Australian Poetry*, edited by John Tranter and Philip Mead. No Asians. The third was *The Oxford Book of Modern Australian Verse*, edited by Peter Porter. Nothing Asian. The last was something compiled by Thomas Shapcott called *The Moment Made Marvellous: A Celebration of UQP Poetry*, published in 1998. Pretty alliterative, about as alliterative as *Pride and Prejudice*, but again Asian-less. Plus the painful reminder that UQP has rejected all my five poetry collections. Even the recent Five Islands Press poetry series, funded by the Australia Council, for whatever reasons, does not have a single book of poetry by any Asian poets.

Do these anthologies contain European migrant writers and Aboriginal writers? Yes, they do. White and black, it seems. No yellow. Yellow goes with Peril, I remember.

Hang on. They are not as progressive and liberal-minded as they seem, if you compare these white male poets with our great Australian women poets when it comes to Asians. How hateful and distasteful this word 'Asian' must have seemed to those white male poets of Anglo-Saxon or European origins! Something in *Penguin Book of Australian Women Poets* (1986) makes it different. It contains one Asian woman's poems. That woman is a Vietnamese poet by the name of Thuy Ai Nguyen Thi. I'm sure you wonder who that is. I wonder, too.

Not surprisingly, another 1980s anthology, *Women Poets of the 80s*, edited by an Australian woman, published in 1987, also includes an Asian poem by Dewi Anggraeni. Why the 1980s? Why not the 1990s? Why not the year 2000? Have we gone backwards?

To claim that Asian writings are not valued in this country would be grossly unfair. People from Ee Tiang Hong, Brian Castro, Beth Yahp, Adam Aitken, Sang Ye, Lilian Ng, Arlene Chai, Lau Siew Mei, David Chan, to someone like me, as well as other Asian writers, have been published in nearly all the major Australian literary journals and new writing anthologies including the *Picador New Writings* series, the Victorian Writers' Centre anthology *Eat Tongue*, and *Influence: Australian Voices* (1997), edited by Peter Skrzynecki. And their writings have been included in such school text-book anthologies as *From Yellow Earth to Eucalypt: stories and poems from China* (1995), *Australian Mosaic: an anthology of multicultural writing* (1997), *Sharing Fruit: an anthology of Asian and Australian writing* (1998) and *Exploring Australia* (2000). Still, no Asian poets are present in poetry anthologies of the 1990s and the Five Islands series of the year 2000.

I attended the Writers' Festival panel and found I was

the only male Asian writer appearing with five Asian women; together we were labelled 'Asian-Australian Writers'. That provided me with a good opening. I said that I had always been associated with women. In fact, I was one of the very few male poets published by *Hecate*, a feminist journal based in Brisbane. What I did not say was that Asian men are often treated like women in male Australian fiction. (Think of Christopher Koch's Kwan in *The Year of Living Dangerously*; the man has to be played by an ugly woman actor in the film adaptation!)

But I digress. The idea of us being 'Asian-Australian' made me uncomfortable. I had not heard Australian writers of European extraction referred to as 'European-Australians'. Just think of Patrick White or David Malouf described as one of the greatest 'European-Australian' writers. Or tell students at Australian Studies Centres around the world of our great English-Australian writers such as Rodney Hall, Alex Miller, Elizabeth Jolley or Drusilla Modjeska, a Polish name that may have contributed to her success, one suspects and who cares? Now, if you find that an insult, then work out whether you need to continue to call us 'Asian-Australian writers'.

European-Australians are the 100 per cent *real* Australians embodying the spirit of Australianism whereas Asian-Australian, even less important than Aboriginal-Australians, are 70 per cent or even 50 per cent Australian. They are ASIAN-Australian, which means non-Australian. Asian-Australians are supposed to have no business in Australian intellectual, cultural and artistic life; they are supposed to have only commercial value, being economic animals.

I made no attempt to hide this view when recently interviewed by someone from the Chinese section at the ABC. I said Australia was interested in Asia only because it viewed Asia as a marketplace rather than a place offering cultural and spiritual values. Or if it *was* interested in Asia's literary and arts offerings, that interest was often coloured by its Orientalist preference for the exotic and limited by its desire to see only what matched its expectations – for example, the need for democracy in politics and freedom of expression in arts, while ignoring the complexity of the Asian cultures and the kind of artistic freedom that isn't known of here. Australia is really a very conservative and backward-looking country in arts by comparison with, say, China today.

Let me name a few Asian poets in Australia who write in English. Ee Tiang Hong, an Australian citizen originally from Malaysia, who published two collections; Adam Aitken, of Thai and English parentage, whose third book of poetry, *Romeo and Juliet in Subtitles*, was shortlisted for this year's *Age* Book of the Year Award for Poetry; Nguyen Thi Hong and Lê Van Tài, two Vietnanmese poets; Ken Chau who was published internationally, David Chan, Andrew Lau and Shen in Adelaide, and I myself.

Not a lot, you might say, but what matters is not the number but the quality of the ignorance. Australian poets of Asian origins will not be noticed as long as the owner of that White Gaze remains the Establishment.

As the country is becoming increasingly mixed with more new blood from all over the world, the Hansonite and Murrayesque desire to keep Australia and, by extension, Australian poetry white, will meet with the strongest resistance from people like me. It has come to a point where the oppression of non-publication fails to work and the individual power will prevail. Publication or not, as long as you keep writing and believe in what you write, you will win, even if it takes 1000 years for that victory to come through. Australian cultural and literary racism is still something to reckon with and may take that long to end.

After Readings, I wrote a poem in my car, the gist of which is that it takes Asian artists two years of unbroken stay in Australia to get their Australian citizenship after they secure permanent residence, but it may take them God knows how long to get their artistic or poetic citizenship in Australia.

The anthologist's exclusion of Asian-Australian writers is also censorship, matched by other Australian magazines.

Back to the panel. In the audience, someone challenged my view by posing this question: "You are adamant against being labelled 'Asian-Australian', but hasn't this labelling benefited you or else you would not have been here

today along with other Asian Australian writers? Aren't you having it both ways?"

Yes, I suppose I'm having it both ways because as an 'Asian-Australian' writer, I have been 'anthology-ghettoized'. Thanks to this multiculturalism that favours us Asians I have been published by most Australian magazines. I should feel gratitude for being 'embraced'.

But then, I am not having it both ways. In China, where I spent four months as AsiaLink writer-in-residence at Beijing University last year, I could not get a teaching job because I was recognized as a non-native English speaker (as opposed to a pure white English native speakers). In Australia, I have not been able to get any jobs doing what I want – teaching Australian literature or Australian Studies – simply because I am a bloody Chink! No-one would say so but everyone thinks that way. You can't read their minds but their minds are transparent. Just refer to their anthologies.

Am I having it both ways?

A few years back, someone told me why she enjoyed books written by a particular Asian writer. "Informative," she said. And when I was interpreting for a Chinese television delegation which interviewed the executive director of an Australian company about his view of Chinese culture in Australia, the director stammered about the wonderful Chinese food, the dragon, blah-blah-blah. It was really touching, I mean sickening, to see the ignorance staring in your face. These are the things you expect of your 'Asian-Australian' writers: information, for which they have to act as your secret agents; misery, for which they have to dig all the dirty laundry out of their miserable past; exotic stuff, for which they have to invent in order to please.

"They have had it too easy for too long," as I said to an Australian editor, who complained about my "bad writing". That is right. *The Bulletin* called the Chinese 'The Bad Chinese' in a poem a hundred years ago and now the contemporary Australian gatekeepers and old guards complain, ever so quietly and secretively, about the 'bad writing' of people like me, constantly saying things like 'in-your-face' and 'aggressive'. I suppose that is why Asians are deleted out of this pure white high-and-mighty Australian context of poetry, although the number of Asians is increasing.

That no Asians are included in major anthologies is just as 'in-your-face' and as 'aggressive'. Look at the recent issue of *Granta* featuring so-called Australian writing. It's nothing but a showbag of colonialism clothed in gaudy rags of big names that have ceased to interest anyone except their own ilk.

I often wonder what sort of standards these white male elitist anthologizers use to decide who is in and who is out. From my point of view, much poetry that has been included in those anthologies is not worth reading, so badly written that it could be chucked out without thinking. They don't stand the test of time; they don't even stand the test of the Ethnic Gaze, the Asian Gaze, the Alternative Gaze, that says NO to it all as we often do.

The handful of people who decide whose writing is 'good' and whose is 'bad', who appear on Book Shows, who judge awards, who give lectures at Literary Luncheons, who collect their likes, who reject, who include themselves and exclude the others – they are similar to the totalitarian cultural and literary establishment in China by nature and worse because in China there is at least underground publishing that gets your stuff out. But here the economic hell reigns supreme with paradise forever monopolized by THEM.

In 1974, two major anthologies of Asian-American writings were published, one titled *Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, and the other titled *Asian American Heritage: An Anthology of Prose and Poetry*. These were followed by another, *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction*. Although Australia, a latecomer to the scene, produced some anthologies that contained Asian writings in the 1980s and 1990s[1], there has so far never been an anthology entirely written and edited by Asian-Australians. It is an embarrassment if anything to the cultural and literary establishment of Australia that boasts of close proximity to Asia and of a large and increasing Asian population that has been in this country since the early 1800s. The idea of this anthology grew out of my frustration with Australia's parochialism and cultural narrow-mindedness and of an attempt to bring something new into this often stifling

and strangling, philistine and money-oriented cultural and literary environment. Australia has waited more than two hundred years for that Asian voice to break out and the voice is still forthcoming, not because it is not coming but because it is being suppressed and trampled upon, with such seemingly convincing reasons that there may not be a market for such things.

Someone in the audience challenged this by asking: You don't like being lumped together as 'Asian-Australian' but why do you keep harping on this 'Asian-Australian writing' thing?

Good question, to which my answer is: If mainstream Australian literature keeps excluding 'Asian-Australians', the second best and only choice is this: We'll create a minor-stream, which may grow into a mainstream one day, I am sure. Call it 'Asian-Australian writing' if you will, for the moment.

Postscript: A version of this article was submitted to Quadrant *and rejected, with a letter citing two Asians included in John Leonard's anthology – one being Emma Lew and the other being Dipti Saravanamuttu. Emma Lew is not Asian, but Jewish. Dipti Saravanamuttu is the only Asian included in ten years.*

NOTE

1. Such as *The Strength of Tradition: Stories of the Immigrant Presence in Australia*, edited by R.F. Holt and published in 1983, *Writing in Multicultural Australia*, published in 1985, *Displacements 2. Multicultural Storytellers*, edited by Sneja Gunew and published in 1987, *Beyond the Echo: Multicultural Women's Writing*, edited by Sneja Gunew and published in 1988, *Neighbours: Multicultural Writing of the 1980s*, edited by R.F. Holt and published in 1991, and *Influence*, edited by Peter Skrzynecki (whose 1985 anthology *Joseph's Coat* did not contain one single Asian entry) and published in 1997.

New Theatre on the Brink[1]

Michelle Arrow

SYDNEY NEW THEATRE is Australia's oldest continuously running theatre company, founded in the depths of the Great Depression (as the Sydney Workers Art Club) in 1932. Rising to public notice with their production of American playwright Clifford Odets' play *Waiting for Lefty*, the group became notorious for their performance of another Odets play, *Till the Day I Die*, in 1936. Strongly critical of Nazi Germany, performances of the play were banned by the Federal government, a ban that was defied by the theatre until it was finally lifted in 1941 – almost two years after Australia's declaration of war on Germany.[2] With its reputation as a distinctive, defiant theatrical voice assured, the Sydney theatre continued to consolidate its position throughout the 1940s and fifties, nurturing Australian playwrights like Oriel Gray and Mona Brand, and developing a distinctive brand of naturalistic nationalism alongside a concurrent strand of savagely satirical revues.

The theatre has weathered many storms throughout its history. There was the time the theatre was raided by the police during the so-called 'phoney war' period between September 1939 and June 1941 (the theatre, falling in line with Australian Communist Party policy in light of the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact, maintained an unpopular anti-war stance until the USSR was invaded by the Nazis in 1941). Constant surveillance by ASIO in the post-war period meant that many worked for the theatre under pseudonyms; others had their phones tapped, their appearances, plays and activities described (derogatively) by agents, and carefully filed away in one of the sixteen volumes of documents gathered on the theatre and housed at the National Archives. Wavering member numbers during the 1950s meant that much of the work of the theatre was performed by a small number of dedicated volunteers who laboured without a permanent theatre space – all to produce shows that were poorly publicized (the *Sydney Morning Herald* famously refused to accept the theatre's advertisements from 1948 to 1961) and staged under difficult circumstances that would have sunk many other, less dedicated companies.[3] Yet despite its variable fortunes, the theatre has always striven to present 'plays with a purpose' – theatre that was socially and politically committed, with a hopeful message for change. For many years, decades even, this made the New unique in Sydney. However, this is no longer the case, and

this, combined with a number of other factors, recently plunged the theatre into crisis.

In February/March this year, the New Theatre faced a financial emergency that threatened to bring about its demise – almost sixty-eight years after its first production in 1933. A combination of instability amongst the theatre's management committee, poor box office throughout 2000, the impact of the GST, the changing face of the theatre's membership and shifts in the Sydney theatre scene had left the theatre in considerable debt. It has been without its paid administrator since December 2000 and has been reliant on members to volunteer their time to co-ordinate the day-to-day running of the theatre. As a non-profit organization, New Theatre survives without subsidies or government grants; it generates income solely from its shows and the occasional rental of the theatre space. This dependence on box office has led to changes in the types of shows the theatre is able to produce. Certainly there is less room to take risks than there used to be.

New Theatre has, of necessity, changed course in recent years. It still broadly adheres to its policy of creating 'socially relevant and committed theatre' through the production of socially and politically relevant plays, but this mix has been more recently leavened by the (financially necessary) addition of plays set for study in the NSW Higher School Certificate. The theatre wants to perform well-written plays that will challenge an audience, and make them question the way society operates, but, as new President Frank McNamara noted, these sorts of plays are hard to find – particularly galling when the theatre used to have members who could routinely write these kinds of plays. An additional problem in finding plays is that the theatre is only ever able to bid for the amateur performance rights, which limits the number of new plays, even new Australian plays, that they are able to obtain and produce (most authors hold out for professional productions). Socially committed plays like *The Laramie Project*, a documentary-style performance which depicted the reactions of the Laramie community to the murder of young gay man Matthew Shepard, are now routinely part of the repertoire of professional theatre companies like Belvoir's Company B, not the New.

A further problem has developed as the theatre's membership base has shifted; namely, that the New can no longer rely on the pull of collective political purpose to inspire, cajole or persuade members to participate. New Theatre has always relied on the commitment of its members: their willingness to not only perform in New Theatre shows, but also, as long-term member (and recent Acting President) Marie Armstrong notes, to do the 'shit work' – the front of house and production work essential to the theatre's functioning.[4] The theatre has always stressed that members work in production as well as performance – a rule that didn't pose a problem when the theatre's membership was drawn almost exclusively from a politically motivated, but theatrically interested base. However, the membership composition of the theatre has changed dramatically since the fifties and sixties, with most members (80 per cent by Armstrong's estimate) now chiefly interested in auditioning for shows, not in the political issues that previously occupied the thoughts of theatre members. Armstrong commented: "There's hardly any politics talked in the dressing room now, back in the old days there used to be". Many of the theatre's newer members want to act in productions to get noticed, to get an agent, to work in professional theatre, with a result that many of the things that the theatre used to be able to rely on its membership to do, now have to be paid for. The theatre can no longer afford to take as many risks as it used to.

The change in the position of the New Theatre in Sydney's theatrical landscape can also be attributed to the vast changes that this landscape has undergone since the late 1960s. By the end of the 1960s the New was riding a wave of public and critical acceptance, closely tied to its strong anti-Vietnam war stance. Audiences were more receptive to New Theatre, and new kinds of theatre, than they had ever been before. Yet just when the public's appetite for Australian theatre was thoroughly whetted, riding a surge of nationalistic fervour and political change, the public place for theatre was taken over

and occupied by those who were younger, fresher, more timely: the La Mama and Australian Performing Group plays and playwrights who would lead a new wave of Australian theatre into the seventies. Critic John McCallum wrote of New Theatre playwright Mona Brand's historical overshadowing by the seventies generation:

> As a playwright for half a century she has watched, with great patience and humility, as every new style, every bold new production, every radical theatrical intervention in public political debate, has been taken over by parvenu young men.[5]

Groups like the New Theatre movement, and writers like Brand, found themselves competing for public attention and artistic credibility with younger, new-left playwrights, and were pushed to the margins of Australian theatre history. Suddenly, other, more prescient theatrical movements reaped the rewards of a theatre culture that New Theatre had played such an important role in fostering. New Theatre has always been ahead of its time, but this didn't always work to its benefit. A production of a play about Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, for example, directed by Marie Armstrong and performed in 1988, resulted in one of the theatre's worst-ever box-office takings.

By early April 2001, however, the situation was looking less dire for the theatre. A new committee had been elected, a mixture, as Marie Armstrong declared, of the old (President Frank McNamara) and the new (artistic director Pete Nettell). The previous Management Committee represented a new, "more corporate sort of management . . . it was eating into our democratic processes", Armstrong noted, and this faction is no longer represented in the theatre's committees. Most importantly, the theatre has been able to raise more than $30,000 in two months, enough to cover its debts. While South Sydney and Marrickville Councils made significant donations ($5000 and $2000 respectively), the vast majority of these funds have been raised through donations from individuals and Trade Unions (the CFMEU, the Flight Attendants Association, the Public Sector Union and the Metalworkers Union all donated funds). Marie Armstrong said that the majority of donated funds were relatively small amounts (under $100), with many coming from the inner west of Sydney, close to the theatre's Newtown base.

However, as President Frank McNamara cautioned, the theatre still has to fund itself (especially the services of a paid administrator) through box-office takings, and in this sense, the problems outlined above are still very pressing for Sydney New Theatre. In a new century where the vanguard of theatre practice has moved elsewhere, where political boundaries have collapsed and shifted, where the censorship battles have been fought and (largely) won, where theatre seems to have almost lost its ability to shock or agitate, and where workers don't often seem keen to participate or create workers' theatre anymore (at least without the support and involvement of established theatre collectives), New Theatre seems increasingly isolated in its drive to create theatre that would effect social change. Risk-taking seems to be a luxury, sadly, that the New can ill afford in the new century.

ENDNOTES

1. *In addition to interviews with Marie Armstrong (19 February, 6 April 2001) and Frank McNamara (9 April 2001), and my own research, this article has drawn on the following sources:* Paul Herlinger, 'A New Direction for the New?', *Australasian Drama Studies*, No. 8, April 1986, pp.97–112; Ken Harper, 'The Useful Theatre: The New Theatre Movement in Sydney and Melbourne 1935–1983', *Meanjin*, Vol. 43 (1), March 1984, pp.56–71; *The New Years 1932– : The Plays, People and Events of Six Decades of Sydney's Radical New Theatre*, New Theatre, revised edition, 1992.
2. Rob Darby has written an excellent and absorbing account of the banning of *Till the Day I Die*, published in *Labour History* 80, may 2001.
3. The Theatre was without a permanent home from 1954 to 1962, and performed their plays under the auspices of the Waterside Workers' Federation Cultural Committee at the WWF theatre in Sussex St. The WWF always had first priority over use of the theatre space, which often led to cancelled rehearsals, storage space was minimal, and the performance space itself was extremely small.
4. Marie Armstrong, interview with Michelle Arrow, 19 February 2001.
5. John McCallum, 'Anonymity: the price of living in interesting times', *The Australian*, 15 December 1995, p.17.

Michelle Arrow has written about the women playwrights associated with the New Theatre in her forthcoming book Upstaged: Australian Women Playwrights, 1928–1968.

New Theatre

always timely, never grimy and another living treasure

John Barnard

A SUPPORTER OF Sydney's New Theatre since reaching Australia in 1948 as a young member of Britain's Old Vic Company (led by Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh), I acted or directed with New Theatre over the next three decades.

Therefore, Joyce Morgan's interview (*SMH*, 2 February 2001) with its current Artistic Director, Frank McNamara, roused fond memories. While I was sad to read of this theatre's possible demise (financial problems), the article urged me to examine McNamara's statement that "grimy realism . . . has long been the theatre's stock in trade".

Up to its fiftieth anniversary in 1982, the affectionately called 'New' mounted some 365 productions, with the number now well beyond four hundred. The majority of those four hundred were by universally renowned writers (dead and alive, but only eleven in the Third Edition Macquarie Dictionary): Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Moliere, Chekhov, Sean O'Casey, Clifford Odets, J.B. Priestley, Albert Maltz, Tennessee Williams, Jules Feiffer, Ted Willis, John Whiting, Kurt Vonnegut Jnr, David Storey, Tom Stoppard, and the irrepressible eighty-six-year-old Arthur Miller.

The interview also barely mentioned New Theatre's determined policy of presenting Australian plays – mostly new – long before any budding playwrights received professional support. At that fiftieth anniversary the list, totalling 114, resembled a c.v. of our literature, let alone theatre: Louis Esson, Leslie Rees, Betty Roland, Catharine Duncan, Katharine Susannah Prichard, George Landen Dann, Oriel Gray, George Farwell, Dick Diamond, David Martin, Ralph Peterson, Alan Seymour, Dymphna Cusack, Frank Hardy, Kevin McGrath, Barry Oakley, John Romeril, Kevin Barry Morgan, Joan Clarke, Sumner Locke Elliott, Walter Cooper, Nick Enright, Eleanor Whitcombe and Mona Brand. Today we can add David Williamson, Dorothy Hewett, Stephen Sewell. (Seventeen now in the Macquarie – less cultural cringe!).

During that half century perhaps twenty productions could have appeared 'narrowly political' to some theatregoers, including occasional 'Revues' which criticized sacred cows of successive periods as other groups do today with impunity. In fact, nowadays some comedians do the same with far more daring, though less wit and often much of that 'grime'. Yet those few satirical revues gave the New a reputation that even now apparently sees it pigeonholed under 'grimy realism'. Realism perhaps – but grime? The 'grime' of war, greed, hypocrisy, racism and, dare I say, 'monopoly capitalism' (replaced today by 'globalization'?) indeed often provided impetus for its plays, though none could be called grimy themselves.

In a recent interview, Arthur Miller, asked what ideas he presented in the despicable US 'McCarthy' period (such as *The Crucible*), called them his "point of view". Presumably those alternative viewpoints staged by the New in that Cold War period, 1948 to 1961, caused the *Sydney Morning Herald*'s declining to publish its ads, as well as withholding permission for theatre critics to review forty-nine productions. These included plays by Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, Priestley, Moliere, Brecht, Gogol, Jean Paul Sartre, Arthur Miller, Brendan Behan, a Ewan MacColl adaptation of *Good Soldier Schweik*, and twenty-one fresh Australian plays including Dick Diamond's sensational folk musical *Reedy River*. Surely an eclectic policy?

Despite the ban, when presented in New Theatre organizations interstate as well as Sydney, the latter was eventually seen by thousands. Ideas cannot be banned – as was proved again with the controversial NSW Chief Secretary's failed attempt at banning *America Hurrah!* – though that time it was aimed more at Australia's sexual revolution than the New's so-called left-wing politics.

If critical of Joyce Morgan's 'grime' emphasis, it was good to read the *Herald*'s acknowledgement of the negative effect of its

ban and I congratulate the current journalistic staff at our *SMH*. They obviously reflect the openness of Australia's current generation of media workers.

Nineteen-sixty-two saw an upswing in fortunes. That year *The Long and the Short and the Tall* by Willis Hall (director, myself) won first prize in the NSW Arts Council Drama Festival. This triumph was repeated next year with *Our Dear Relations*, Mona Brand's satire on Mother's Day commercialism. The cast included Martin Harris, Mark Edwards, Jean Blue, Vincent Gill; set designer – Robert Bruning; and direction was by two women – Nan Gow and Norma Disher. Long before the Women's Movement flourished, sex discrimination was unknown in New Theatre productions – a significant blessing not often recognized.

Neither did the New forget Children's Theatre. Stimulating productions shown on Saturday arvos included local classics by such as Eleanor Whitcombe and Mona Brand. I sense many of that period – parents or grandparents now – could wish to take young families to *Smugglers Beware*, *The Bushranger*, *Flying Saucery* or *The Three Secrets*, to watch them respond to humour and intrigue equally as they did. Surely one of contemporary live theatre's failures to attract larger audiences arises because few children are introduced to professionally presented well-written plays? Today's children become adult audiences tomorrow – as international cinema recognizes only too well with the movies provided in school holidays.

Finally, New Theatre provided magnificent training for all stagecrafts. Not only did many Oz names of a half century ago, who sought and won fame at home and abroad, start careers at New Theatre, but the tradition continues with many seen on current TV and movie screens. For fear of forgetfulness – 'no names no packdrill' (also an excellent play revived by the New!).

Current media discussion centres on community volunteering – from Olympic Games to carers for the sick or environment. The New's survival depended on such commitments, for theatre was always a Cinderella in artistic awareness. If one replied, "I'm an actor," when asked one's career, the comment usually came, "But what work do you do?" All this existed long before funded organizations like NIDA evolved, before public money enhanced the Sydney Theatre Company, before Opera House venues were even imagined. Only those dedicating time and discipline to learn their craft in rough halls and even rougher dressing rooms would survive; which role saved such persevering groups as the old 'New', over adversities from political ostracism to financial debt.

Such popular actors as Cruise/Kidman might say that era has passed – but such stars are surface glitter and hide the underemployed 'grime'! What better way to avoid tough times re-emerging than by keeping a theatrical treasure? On a living stage – not a dusty museum of memorabilia – but with enough backing to continue a policy of variety in productions.

Yes, despite volunteers, a financially viable structure is also inevitable. That's why I suggest New Theatre, Sydney, should be declared A Living Treasure. If Gough Whitlam (most definitely a Living Treasure) could sense these qualities in the seventies enough to arrange Commonwealth finance for the New to buy its building, surely State Labor Premier Carr could solve a $50,000 debt problem? A popcorn figure compared with most state governments' commercial grants.

Bob Carr has only to read Joyce Morgan's story to realize that quality accounts for the New's inspiring lengthy theatrical history. Perhaps he could even sponsor fundraising efforts, with substantial government input as incentive. Richard Wherrett was right – at least about mainstream productions in NSW. Truly exciting contemporary plays are found in the 'little' theatres like, Carr willing, New Theatre and another excellent one – also long-established – the Ensemble at Milsons Point, which amazingly thrives on a shoestring and a remarkable commitment by professional players and a subscription audience.

I'm seventy-seven, but when passing a hundred I'll be thrilled to realize the New will then soon celebrate a centenary. Who'll be the butt of its satirizing in 2032? Maybe Australia's environmental 'grime'? Whatever – I'm sure its temper will be democratic and bias Australian – like *overland*.

John Barnard is a freelance writer based in Sydney.

Australian Head of State?

the final step from colony to nation state

Jack D. Hammond QC

JUST OVER A CENTURY ago in 1893, Corowa, a border-town on the New South Wales banks of the Murray, seized the opportunity to re-ignite flagging enthusiasm for Australian federation. The move towards federation had stalled and Corowa staged what is now an historic conference. On the second day, a unanimously-adopted motion moved by Victorian Dr John Quick[1] paved the way for Australia to become a nation.

Today, in this centennial year of federation, Corowa is back in the national spotlight. Now, it is the head of state issue which has stalled, and in order to break that impasse, on December 1–2 this year, Corowa will host the second Corowa Conference – designed to recommend a non-partisan process to resolve the head of state issue.[2]

In a year dominated by partisan politics, in which we may see one federal, five state and territory elections and one federal by-election,[3] Corowa's non-partisan approach provides a welcome contrast. Representatives from all major political parties, those with no involvement in politics and the public will meet to kick-start the stalled head-of-state issue. Former Governor-General, Sir Zelman Cowen, patron of the conference, will deliver the opening address.

This second Corowa conference will not deal with "what is the preferable constitutional model" nor whether a constitutional change should be made. They are matters for later consideration. Instead, it is proposed that the Conference set up a high-level, non-partisan drafting committee to prepare legislation to establish all-party committees within each of the parliaments. Those committees will cooperate in investigating and reporting on two questions:

1. Which head of state model would best preserve our democracy if it replaced the monarchy?

2. Which method of deciding the head of state issue would place least strain on our federation?

After that, it is suggested, with the community informed by the reports, that there be plebiscites in which the people of each state and territory will choose their preferred head of state model for their state or territory. They will also choose the model for the commonwealth. There is no constitutional necessity for Australians to choose the same kind of model for the states, territories and the commonwealth, although that is the most likely outcome.

Finally, all Australians would vote in the one referendum on the single question of whether the whole federation (ie. the commonwealth, states and territories) should separate from the monarchy. All powers of constitutional change would be relied on, particularly the new powers created in 1986 by the Australia Acts. If supported by the overall majority of voters and the voting majority and parliament of each state, the whole federation would separate from the monarchy at the same time, with the commonwealth and each state and territory converting to the model chosen in its plebiscite. In this way, constitutional and politically legitimate change can be made without straining the federation. Otherwise, there would be no change. Either way, the issue would be resolved in Australia's interest.

There is an overriding reason why the head of state issue should not be permitted to languish. It appears that most Australians reject the monarchy as a fundamental aspect of their constitution, yet in the same breath vote for its retention.

Whoever occupies the English throne automatically inherits the constitutional and legal position of Australian head of state. The November 1999 republic referendum demonstrated that only 45 per cent of voters supported the 'Yes' vote, and no state recorded majority support. Yet a poll of city and country voters before the referendum showed that 95 per cent agreed the head of state should be an Australian, with 88 per cent strongly agreeing.[4] Furthermore, an Australian Constitutional Referendum Study after the referendum found that when asked if the head of state should be an Australian, 70 per cent strongly agreed and another 19 per cent agreed with the proposition.[5]

Those figures suggest that of the 55 per cent of voters who voted 'No' in the referendum, the overwhelming majority want Australia to separate from the monarchy, but were not satisfied with the republican package on offer. Those polls

coupled with the referendum exposed a latent instability in Australia's constitutional framework. It is politically unhealthy for Australia to have a majority of its people dissatisfied with a key element of their constitution.

From a British colony in 1788, Australia has inexorably advanced towards a self-sufficient nation state. Most constitutional links with England have gone. The final step is to have an Australian head of state.

Some Australians are impatient to take that final step; however, many believe there is no pressing need to take it immediately. For all practical purposes, Australia already has an Australian head of state. The Governor-General performs that role and discharges those duties. And, as the referendum showed, a majority of Australians do not want to take that step unless they are satisfied that it will preserve the stability of our political system, underpinned as it is by the twin pillars of federation and democracy. Nevertheless, an unresolved head of state issue erodes that stability.

Sir Zelman Cowen recently urged Australians to follow the practical non-partisan process that former Governor of Victoria, Richard McGarvie has proposed for early resolution of Australia's head of state issue.[6] Cowen and McGarvie do not share the same view of a model for head of state, yet they share a common view of the non-partisan process needed to resolve the issue.

Australians are entitled to expect that their elected representatives – local, state, territory and federal – will put in place a non-partisan process by which Australians can decide whether, when and how an Australian may become head of state. At the local level, supported by state, territory and federal political representatives, the regional Corowa Shire Council has started this process. The Corowa Conference in December this year will provide a powerful symbolic book-end to Australia's centenary federation celebrations. That will be a fitting end to the centenary, and an ideal beginning for the resolution of the head of state issue.

ENDNOTES

1. "That in the opinion of this Conference the Legislature of each Australasian colony should pass an Act providing for the election of representatives to attend a statutory Convention or Congress to consider and adopt a Bill to establish a Federal Constitution for Australia, and upon the adoption of such Bill or measure it be submitted by some process of referendum to the verdict of each colony." (John Quick and Robert R. Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* (1901), Legal Books, Sydney, 1995, p.153.)
2. The Corowa Conference proposed draft program and proposals are set out in 'Invitation to Comment', Paper 40 on Richard McGarvie's website at www.chilli.net.au/~mcgarvie
3. The Federal, West Australian, Queensland, Northern Territory, ACT and South Australian elections, and the Queensland seat of Ryan by-election.
4. *Weekend Australian*, 9–10 October 1999, p.8.
5. Australian Election Study series, cited in *Federation: The Secret Story*, by Bob Birrell, Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 2001, p.325.
6. Sir Zelman Cowen, 'Wisdom and Hope', St James Ethics Centre 10th Anniversary Annual Lecture, Melbourne, 31 October 2000, pp.11–17; Richard McGarvie, "The Wisdom of Hindsight – The 1999 Republican Referendum – Lessons for the Future', opening paper, seminar of Australian Association of Constitutional Law on Planning for a New Republic, Notre Dame University, Fremantle, 7 October 2000, Paper 37 on Richard McGarvie's website at www.chilli.net.au/~mcgarvie; see also Paper 36.

Jack Hammond QC is assisting the Corowa Shire Council with organizing the Conference. Written comments and suggestions are invited on the draft program and proposals (see endnote 2) and should be sent to Cr Gary J. Poidevin, Mayor, Corowa Shire Council, PO Box 77, Corowa, NSW 2646.

Magazine Wrack

Ian Syson

THE FIRST QUARTER of 2001 has been a busy time for the little magazines. It must be the season for new brooms. Three new editorial appointments have been made, a new quarterly has emerged and *HEAT* has been revived – at the suggestion of that splendid Juvenalesque satirist Imre Saluszinsky – through the support of the Faculty of Arts at University of Newcastle.

Whatever it was that moved the *Meanjin* board to replace current editor Stephanie Holt with Ian Britain I cannot fathom. While I wish Britain well and hope that he proves to be a good appointment, that's not the issue. Holt's editorship was developing and maturing in

formidable ways and it strikes me as a complete lack of judgement for the *Meanjin* board not to have recognized this. After opening the latest issue to hit my desk (1.2001) I experienced that curious double twinge of editorial envy and reading pleasure. Holt and I had continued the tradition of close, combative and friendly relations between *overland* and *Meanjin* editors and I will miss her support, collegiality and co-operation.

Helen Daniel, the late editor of *Australian Book Review* was also renowned for these attitudes. Something she would never have done is edit a letter to the editor without first informing the writer. One of Peter Rose's early editorial acts as the new editor of *ABR* was just that. He cut the following paragraph (and others) from my letter in his first issue:

> Given Rose's recent rise to the editorship of *ABR* – just how do you offer congratulations and wish good luck while simultaneously putting the boot in? – I hope [his] review [of Peter Craven's essay collection] is just some critical aberration and not a foretaste of what we can expect to be Rose's understanding of critical diversity. His regret, for example, that Craven didn't publish Peter Conrad's attack on [Cassandra] Pybus was in effect a call for a third headkicking – after those performed by Peter Coleman and Robert Manne in the previous Craven collection. This demonstrated either amnesia or a capacity for bullying (or, dare I say, gang-bashing), neither of which are suitable traits for the editor of Australia's leading review journal.

When queried about this action he said that as editor he had a right to edit as he saw fit. When I pointed out that he edited out a paragraph criticising him he suggested that it was gratuitous. That point is debateable and the important principle is nonetheless that authors should have final say on matters of substance. I look forward to some dialogue on this point.

Australian Quarterly Essay is the new periodical. It has been established to provide a vehicle for long critical essays that would otherwise not find a forum. The first issue is edited by Peter Craven and the essay is by Robert Manne. Having criticised both of these figures in the past I am pleased to offer strong support for this venture. I concur with much of what is said by the three writers who have in the main responded positively to it in this issue of *overland*.

Laurie Hergenhan, founding editor of *Australian Literary Studies*, has called it a day. The most recent issue (20.1) announces that Leigh Dale from the University of Queensland will take over as editor from 2002. Laurie is a nationally-respected figure whose deep commitment to Australian literature is recognized by all in the field. I wish him well and look forward to the new *ALS* under Dale's editorship.

Her appointment runs against the present trend of replacing female editors with men. While this might sound a little mealy-mouthed – coming from the editor of a magazine which has never had a woman at the helm – I hope this trend does not represent a specific manifestation of the broad contemporary backlash against feminism. In the early nineties most of the leading literary magazines were edited by women. Ten years later the situation is very different.

Another person who might well have been appointed to the editorship of *ALS* is Irmtraud Petersson, one of its long-serving assistants – even if only to boost my theory that to edit a little magazine it is preferable that one's given name start with the letter I. What with Irmtraud, Ivor, Ian and I, all we'd need is for that magnificent Swiftian parodist Imre Saluszinsky to take over *Quadrant* from Paddy and the Is would nearly have it. The problem is that Imre doesn't have the public profile to take over the editorship of Australia's leading right-wing rag. Well, at least he didn't a year ago!

Floating Fund

AND STILL THE donations keep coming and we continue to be overwhelmed by the support. *Overland* would sincerely like to thank the following:

$1000 S.M.; $164 Z.N., T.T.; $150 M.H.; $100 M.M.; $75 J.McL.; $60 J.C.; $40 B.A.; $30 L.J.L.; $25 T.B.; $24 M.F.G., J.C., E.A.W.; $14 V.B., T.S., R.H.G., R.&B.M., M.R., J.M., J.B., J.A., J.&V.B., I.H., E.W., A.S., A.H.K.; $12 V.D., B.J.N-S.; $10 G.B., E.I.; $8 R.B.; $4 H.S.B., F.S.; $2 J.A.S.: totalling $2124.

Portrait of a poet as a fat man

by Lofo

WARNING: PSYCHIATRY IS NOT AN EXACT SCIENCE!

Novel History

Cassandra Pybus

Peter Carey: *The True Story of the Kelly Gang* (UQP, $30).
Frank Moorhouse: *Dark Palace* (Knopf, $39.95).
Rodney Hall: *The Day We Had Hitler Home* (Picador, $25.75).

THERE ARE MARVELLOUS stories to be found in detritus of the past. As historians winkle fascinating tales out of the incomplete and problematic historical record – the tattered letters, dusty ledger books and the old newspaper cuttings – we understand there is a trade-off for all this fabulous booty. We are not at liberty to move our characters or events around in time and space, nor to merge several people into one. What we do not know we are not free to invent. How much more intoxicating to write an historical novel where the author is at liberty to cannibalize the historical sources and re-create them in imagination, making deletions and additions, without ever being held accountable. Readers are familiar with the ruse that novelists employ, usually an unobtrusive author's note which acknowledges the expropriation of historical persons and events – together with their accumulated patina of symbolic significance – yet finally instruct the reader that 'this is a work of the imagination'. But there is also a trade-off for this freedom to manipulate and embellish. While re-creating known events in the imagination the novelist is obliged to provide the reader with an insight into the human drama that no historical document could convey. In accordance with this stipulation Peter Carey's latest bestseller, *The True Story of the Kelly Gang* succeeds admirably.

The story is told by Ned Kelly himself in a vivid, ungrammatical language, a verbal torrent lacking full stops and commas, using "adjectival" and "effing" as suggestive shorthand for the all-too-common obscenities. Shot through with orthographic oddities and colloquialisms, the prose never seems quaint and very rarely hits a jarring note. Carey's Kelly has the same voice as the Jerilderie letter, but with a skilful writer's ear for rhythm and nuance and poetry. Passionate and poetic as it is, the writing also has a tough leanness which manages to restrain its strong emotions. Kelly's intense feelings – alarm for his family, passion for his lover and hatred of his enemies – are always powerfully present, yet his tough but strangely poetic voice never lapses into sentimentality or self-pity.

Ned Kelly and his family are doomed from the start, ground down by "the injustice we poor Irish suffered", as Kelly reiterates the familiar rhetoric. Yet in Carey's telling it is apparent that the doleful fate of the Kelly men is inextricably bound up with the wilful, sexy Ellen Quinn, wife of John 'Red' Kelly, mother of Ned and Dan. In his opening remarks Ned describes the passionate, dark-haired Ellen as "a snare laid out by God for Red Kelly". Ned's very first memory is going with his mother to give a cake to his fifteen-year-old uncle in police custody. After trudging to the police camp though "puddles the colour of mustard the rain like needles in my eyes" mother and son are finally permitted entry "by a huge red jowled creature the Englishman who sat behind the desk". To the awed child this nameless monster was "the most powerful man I ever saw and he might destroy my mother if he so desired". The Englishman breaks open Ellen's freshly baked cake leaving her with only warm crumbs in a cloth which she must thrust to her brother under the barred door:

> Tears poured down her handsome face as she forced the muddy mess of cake and muslin under the door. She cried I would kill the b—ds if I were a man God help me. She used many rough expressions I will not write them here. It were eff this and ess that and she would blow their adjectival brains out.

Ellen Quinn's desire for bloody retribution is exactly what Ned grows into manhood to fulfil.

For all that, Ned Kelly is a good boy who strives to be an honest, respectable citizen. It is his adored

mother who ruthlessly sets him on a criminal path. Kelly's unwilling and unwitting descent into murderous criminality begins at fifteen when Ellen apprentices him to her lover, the bushranger Harry Power. Once apprenticed to the hard man, there could be no turning back: "I were already travelling full tilt toward the man I could become . . . We was Past and Future we was Innocence and Age riding very hard", Ned acknowledges. The boy's coming of age, in a series of farcically inept hold-ups, is recounted with savage humour. When he finally breaks free, all young Ned has to show for his bushranging are some glass marbles taken from a Chinese man and a three-year prison sentence.

For his mother he has no recrimination. She remains the light of his life. "Hubba hubba Mamma is your girl", Dan Kelly taunts his elder brother. Not even the love of Mary Hearn can wean Ned from his oedipal attachment. He robs a bank to get the money to escape to California with his pregnant lover, but refuses to go while his mother is in prison. Mary decides that Ned loves his mother better than her, so she takes the money and departs alone, thereby supplying the crucial narrative device of an unseen daughter on the other side of the world for whom Ned compulsively scribbles his 'true' history.

The Oedipal theme is a brilliant narrative strategy and one which springs straight from the historical record. It is well known that Ned Kelly's rage against the police was fuelled by the imprisonment of his mother and that he offered to sacrifice himself to the police if they would let her go. That Carey's Ned is a man intoxicated with the power of language also makes perfect historical sense. The famous Jerilderie Letter reveals Kelly to have been just the passionate, self-justifying pamphleteer that Carey has so vividly created: a man desperate to have his say and enraged by the refusal of those in authority to allow it. All writers would feel Kelly's pain when he discovers the newspapers will not print what he had written: "I kicked the papers apart and would have ripped them with gun shot were it not for fear of revealing our location to the traps . . . my words had been stolen from my very throat". When the printer at Jerilderie does not set his letter and hands it over to the police instead, Ned doggedly begins to write all fifty-eight pages over again. He is so determined that his autobiography be 'true', that at Glenrowan he is seduced into his doom by the flattery of the crippled schoolteacher, Curnow, who slyly asks to read what he is writing.

> It is very dammed good said he.
> It is rough I know.
> It is most bracing and engaging given the smallest of improvements it could be made into something no professor would ever think to criticise.
> I said I knew the fault were in the parsing.
> Parsing pah he cried it is a simple matter if you let me assist.

This over-weaning concern for his prose at such a critical moment is the real weakness in Kelly's armour. In the face of Joe Byrne's incredulity, Ned allows the schoolteacher to take his manuscript to his home to work on it. As John Updike has observed, Carey's Ned Kelly is like so many writers, a man ultimately betrayed by his editor. As all Australians know, it was the schoolteacher who hobbled down the tracks to alert the trainload of police and thus precipitated the fearsome, fiery end of the Kelly gang. This manoeuvre plausibly accounts for the survival of the thirteen parcels of dog-eared, water-stained manuscript, when everything else in the siege at Glenrowan was consumed by flames.

WHEREAS CAREY has relied heavily on several books on Kelly, notably Ian Jones's *Ned Kelly: A Short Life*, Frank Moorhouse has undertaken his own exhaustive archival research into the history of the League of Nations. Taken together *Grand Days* and *Dark Palace* represent both a history of the League and the sentimental education of his plucky heroine, Edith Campbell Berry. In *Grand Days,* Moorhouse showed that he could be a formidable historian. In the companion novel, which covers the decade of the 1930s and the terrible war which followed, the meticulous research is still apparent, but here the tumultuous historical events serve as little more than a backdrop to the tumultuous personal history of his fictional heroine. The famous and the lesser-known historical figures of the League have walk-on parts, as do other notables of the time. James Joyce seeks help in rescuing his daughter from occupied France; Edith visits T.S. Eliot's psychoanalyst; while on a brief trip to Australia she is introduced at Sydney University by Enoch Powell and takes a question from the young James McAuley. None of these historical figures engage as real people in the narrative. Even the poignant figure of Sean Lester, who served as Secretary-General throughout the war, seems more of a prop than a fully-fleshed character, despite Moorhouse having access to his private diary. For the most part

the historical backdrop is conveyed through interminable conversations about sanctions and disarmament in a series of historical tableaux. Certainly the action does move away from the set pieces in the League, to Edith's bedroom or the decadent Molly club, but I found a narrative strategy of having men in frocks discussing the League's failure to enforce sanctions against Italy's invasion of Ethiopia simply risible.

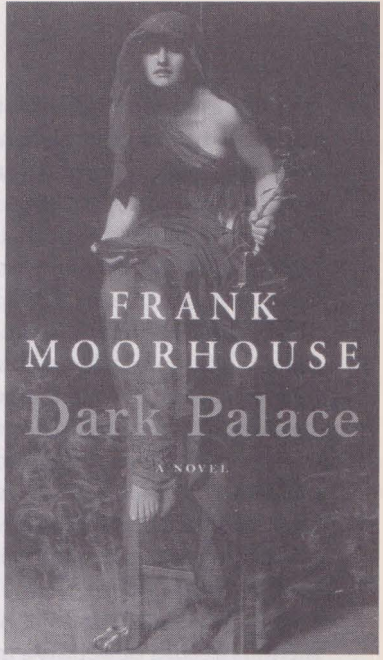
At nearly seven hundred pages the book is way too long. Moorhouse, who is usually such a lively writer, has cast his narrative in stately prose which could not compel my attention for such a long haul. Even the sex scenes between Edith and her ambidextrous lover Ambrose Westwood seem stilted and curiously flat. Moreover, these two people can't convince me they are distinct characters as much as two aspects of the one. In interviews Moorhouse has said that the novel is "an expression of the female part of my persona" and that's just how it reads to me. Ultimately, my problem is that I cannot believe in the fictional creation of Edith Campbell Berry. A survey of all the women I know who have read *Dark Palace* – this includes several prize-winning novelists – has been unanimous on this point: we do not find Edith a credible character. Because I don't believe in her, I can't care about what happens to her. As for the fate of the League of Nations, I already knew about that from my own research.

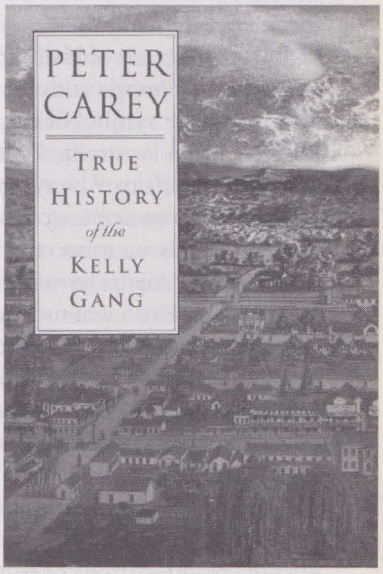
At the end of *Dark Palace* Edith and Ambrose lie naked in their San Francisco hotel room, bereft of the League they lived and breathed for decades, as well as their gorgeous nighties, and thinking about how to make a place for themselves in this new world. There is no sense that the place will be in Australia. Edith's sentimental education in the tumult of Europe does not lead her back to re-fashion her smug, provincial antipodean home.

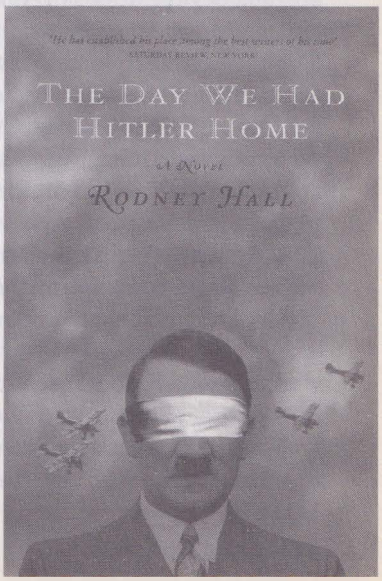
By contrast, this is exactly where the sentimental education of Audrey McNeil takes her. Audrey is the audacious young heroine of Rodney Hall's new novel, *The Day We Had Hitler Home*. Like Edith she is a privileged, clever girl abroad in Europe in the same dangerous times. She too is swept up in a love affair no less transgressive, but with much more devastating effect: her beautiful African lover is beaten to death by Nazi thugs enraged by his sexual liaison with a white woman.

The Day We Had Hitler Home is the seventh and last in a series of novels in which Hall traces a metaphorical history of Australia beginning in Europe in the seventeenth century with a French composer inventing the idea of Australia and finishing in the twentieth century with an Australian woman creating Europe as a film. Whereas the first book is set in the court of Louis XIV, who was the dominant figure of his time, the last book has at its centre the dominant figure of the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler. To attempt a fictional re-creation of a figure with as much symbolic resonance as Hitler is an even more audacious move than taking on Ned Kelly, but Hall has pulled off this tricky manoeuvre with colours flying.

Taking as his point of departure the historical fact that Hitler was temporarily blinded by gas in 1918 and that his autobiography described 1919 as a lost year, Hall has a disgruntled Hitler disembark at Cuttajo NSW in 1919, the result of "a muddle with its origin right back in the trenches, himself in the wrong line, wrong queue, wrong field ambulance and now, having disembarked from a totally unexpected voyage, at the wrong port". Curious Audrey, armed with her film camera, captures him as he gropes blindfolded toward her family. "Though we had no warning it was Europe







itself that approached," she tells us. As luck has it Audrey can speak German and she asks the stranger who he is. Hall undercuts the awesome impact of the name with deft comic irony when the bossy older sister Sybil insists that this is a subterfuge: "Adolf Hitler did he say? Never heard of such a person! He can't fool me. He is Dieter Leppert. I'd recognize him anywhere." Her husband picks up the theme, saying, "I dare say it doesn't matter who he is: a somebody called Leppert or a nobody called Hitler". The exquisite irony is that the reader knows too well how much it does matter. And, Audrey, so fascinated by the surly stranger that she follows him to Munich, will learn that too, at great cost, in her headlong rush from innocence into painful knowledge. It is a journey captured on many spools of film which Audrey transports back to Australia; a vivid documentary record of her own metamorphosis and the turbulent temper of the times.

But it is not part of Hall's intention to contrast the corruption of Europe with the innocence of Australia. By placing the symbol of the modern world's greatest atrocity in Australia, Hall is not merely playing with ironic effect. Always his emphasis is on the connection between the old and new worlds. As the novel reminds us more than once it was a proud moment for Australia when "our very own Billy Hughes, face like a walnut" signed the terrible Treaty of Versailles which ruined Germany and caused the economic despair and social discontent on which Hitler rode to power. As Audrey's experience allows us to appreciate, the mindset which leads rampaging Nazis to batter her lover to death and ordinary Germans to turn a blind eye to the rising tide of violent anti-Semitism is not of a different order to the attitude of generations of Australians engaged in the decimation and dispossession of indigenous people. The clue to this connection is embedded in the very first chapter, before the arrival of Hitler turns Audrey's life topsy turvy. Curiously drawn to the Aboriginal girl, Etty, who worked for her sister, Audrey asks about her mother:

> – We was taken away from her.
> She sliced some warm bread and I buttered it. Her knife was sharp and mine blunt.
> – Who took you?
> She sawed furiously scowling at the loaf.
> – Police.
> The clock marked out its own unending question and answer.
> Click?-clack. Click?-clack
> – What did you do wrong?
> – Got born.
> I left it at that. Such simple certainties were too puzzling. I had trouble enough with my own life.

By the time Audrey has experienced almost more trouble than she can bear, she begins to understand the nature of these 'simple certainties'.

If this makes *The Day We Had Hitler Home* sound portentous, think again. This is a surprising, funny, exhilarating and superbly accomplished novel; Rodney Hall's best book to date.

Cassandra Pybus is ARC Senior Research Fellow jointly in History and English at the University of Tasmania. Her latest book, The Devil and James McAuley *(UQP) won the 2000 Adelaide Festival Award for Non-Fiction.*

Identity Politics

Kate Darian-Smith

John Docker and Gerhard Fischer (eds): *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* (UNSW Press, $37.95).

Mary Ann Bin-Sallik (ed.): *Aboriginal Women by Degrees: Their stories of the journey towards academic achievement* (UQP, $21.90).

SINCE THE 1990S there has been a new and vigorous discussion of the cultural politics of race and ethnicity in Australia – not just within academic circles, but at the level of government policy and party politics, and in the popular press. *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* reflects this broad social context, with the majority of the collection's chapters originating at an international conference on identity and constructions of the multicultural subject held in Sydney in 1998. But as editors John Docker and Gerhard Fischer point out, concerns raised by the contributors are as much about race and indigeneity as migration and multiculturalism. This marks a shift in Australian public debate, a fusion of what Ann Curthoys calls the "distinct yet connected" discourses about, on the one hand, the status and experiences of indigenous peoples, and, on the other, the challenges posed by non-British immigrants to Australian society. By the end of the 1990s, the categories of indigenous and

multicultural were being collapsed into an unprecedented and 'uneasy' relationship within the public sphere. Curthoys conceptualizes these jostling discourses as symptomatic of the friction between the dual processes of colonization (continuing) and decolonization (not yet achieved) which shape contemporary Australia.

Curthoys' authoritative chapter provides the necessary historical framework for understanding how specific anxieties about race and migration – triggered by the comments of Pauline Hanson – have emerged over the past decade. This is taken up in more detail, drawing upon various case studies, in the subsequent chapters. These are grouped under the headings of 'Aboriginal Identity', 'Asians in Australia/Australians in Asia', 'Bi-culturalism and Multiculturalism in New Zealand' and 'Whiteness'.

The chapters on Australia and Asia sit together well. Ien Ang elegantly dissects Asianness in the Australian cultural imagination; Li-Ju Chen investigates the Taiwanese diaspora and nationalism; Jan Pettman examines gender politics in Australian international relations discourse on Asia; and Kathryn Robinson probes media representations of the clash between Asian and Australian 'values' in the Gillespie kidnapping case. The section on identity in New Zealand is less satisfying. This is not because individual papers lack quality (Sarah Dugdale's study of Pakeha identity in literature is particularly strong), but because the broader contextualization of New Zealand politics and society is just too thin. It would have been helpful if the relationship between Australia and New Zealand – and its impact on national identity, ethnicity, migration and colonialism – was addressed more directly. As the collection stands, debates about bi- and multi-culturalism in New Zealand are fairly marginal to the book's focus on cultural diversity and race in Australia.

A number of essays in *Race, Colour and Identity* pull provocatively at the threads of that tangled web of private and public experiences, the personal and the political. Despite its sharp opening (a rather bizarre airing of a supposed slight from feminist colleagues), the spirit of the essay by Jackie Huggins, Kay Saunders, and Isabel Tarrago is generous and warm. In tracing the parallel lives of their respective mothers, the authors explore aspects of the histories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in Queensland over the past century. The writing here is intensely personal, dealing with emotions and love and respect, and is all the more powerful for that. As Jackie Huggins writes, "One of the key steps to reconciliation is understanding and accepting the history of our shared experiences as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and peoples of the wider community".

Gerhard Fischer examines the complex definitions of Aboriginality through his sensitive discussion of the "mis-taken" racial identities of the well-known writer, Mudrooroo, and the diplomat autobiographer, Gordon Matthews. Fischer, who has previously collaborated with Mudrooroo, provides the best account I have read about the controversy surrounding the 'authenticity' of Mudrooroo's Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal private and public identities; and usefully discusses the ways identity is 'made' through lived circumstances. Aileen Moreton-Robinson's chapter demonstrates how "middle-class, feminist academics continue to deny their white race privilege, while advocating an anti-racist practice." Moreton-Robinson's analysis of the answers given by white female academics to questions about cultural difference is confronting, especially if (like me) you share many of the inherent assumptions of her interviewees. This is challenging work, explaining why race does matter in theory and practice, and arguing that 'whiteness' can only be decentred when white academics acknowledge their own subject position.

There are other perceptive contributions to this unusually strong collection of essays, which has been skilfully brought together by Docker and Fischer. *Race, Colour and Identity* deserves a wide readership.

Aboriginal Women Towards Degrees is a very different collection, although it too tackles racism and inequality. This modest yet inspiring book celebrates the academic achievements of thirteen indigenous women – ranging in age, background, and location – in today's Australia. For editor Mary Ann Bin-Sallick "the intellectual life of Aboriginal women has changed dramatically since the introduction of a new and varied intellectual life, transported here a little over two centuries ago". But it is only very recently, with "the demolition of some of the barriers that prevented indigenous participation in the higher education sector [that] Aboriginal women have capitalized on opportunities to participate in Western intellectual thought".

To explore what this has meant for Aboriginal women, their communities and Australian society more generally, Bin-Sallick invited her contributors to reflect upon their personal motivations for, and experiences of, university education. The result is a

series of autobiographical accounts, written with humour, flair and honesty. They tell us much about individual determination in the face of enormous social, economic and cultural barriers, about the importance of family support, and about moments of alienation and triumph. *Aboriginal Women by Degrees* provides examples of role models for a rising generation of Indigenous women scholars. But this book should also be required reading for educators and those interested in peeling back the layers of racism and sexism that run through Australian life.

Associate Professor Kate Darian-Smith is Director of the Australian Centre, University of Melbourne.

Confronting Shame

Thea Calzoni

Rosumund Dalziell: *Shameful Autobiographies* (MUP, $29.95).

WHAT DRIVES AUTOBIOGRAPHY? For Rosumund Dalziell, the scent of shame is the allure of selected Australian autobiographies, in what they reveal about our culture and those with the audacity to write about their own lives. From these works she exhumes guilty secrets, like illegitimacy and shame – from 'cultural cringe' to racist victimization. She documents the significance of shame in Australian culture in the inherited tradition of eighteenth-century European literature, and in the historical circumstances that have shaped Australians' sense of themselves. She mounts a convincing argument that the emotions of shame give rise to a desire for understanding and social acceptance which may be realised in the successful publication of one's warts and all life story.

I am impressed by Dalziell's scholarship and almost seduced into swallowing her argument that autobiography is therapeutic. Until I confront her omissions. She refers to distinguished Australian academics, such as Kathleen Fitzpatrick, who was shamed by a second-class degree at Oxford and her regretted marriage to a radical larrikin. And to luminaries like Germaine Greer and Robert Dessaix revealing illegitimate births. To indigenous Australian life-story tellers like Sally Morgan and Ruby Langford Ginibi who bear testimony to racist shame. These writers provided examples of the strands of shame that Dalziell has found to be deeply embedded in Australian culture. But why omit James McLelland, writing without shame of his sex life, his doomed quest for essential truths in Marxism and his confidence that he is progressing towards some completion as a human being? And in racist testimony, why not include Don McLeod's story of his experience of the first Aboriginal stockmen's strike, and the mining and pastoral companies formed and operated cooperatively by the strikers successfully yandying minerals to support themselves? Why neglect this occasion for (white) pride in Indigenous history?

I cannot refute Dalziell's claim that shame is deeply embedded in Australian culture. Along with many other Australians, I am shamed by the deeds of my forebears and the ways in which I continue to reap the benefits of the profit they made from land taken from Aboriginal people. Shame lurks in the ongoing debate about whether the nation owes an apology to Aboriginal Australians. Dalziell identifies black pride in "the diversity of resistance to shame to be found in Aboriginal autobiographies". She finds the narcissistic tendencies inherent in autobiography are transcended in autobiographical confrontations of shame which have the potential to open up festering wounds within society, overcoming denial and facilitating healing, tolerance and reconciliation. Is it the case that shame, like the idea of original sin, has a redemptive quality when it is confessed and overcome? Something of this idea has motivated my own once-held belief in the socially redemptive capacity of injured workers' testimonies of the shame and struggle they experienced. Alas, the social revolution is yet to come. Enough people are not sufficiently moved by tales of confrontation with suffering to effect a change in the processes which 'blame the victim'. I have begun to lose faith in the grand narrative of humanism.

There is no place within Dalziell's narrative for autobiographical writing which does not include testimony of shame or resistance to it. Nor would we expect there to be given her thesis of the centrality of shame in autobiography. And her thesis works for the ground she covers from Jean Jaques Rousseau to Charles Perkins. Shame in autobiography is undoubtedly prevalent and plausibly linked to problems of Australian identity and contemporary political debate. Dalziell demonstrates that shame is identifiable in Australian autobiography, from the convict stain to the cultural cringe, from questions of legitimacy of birth to those of legitimacy of race, from the urge to conceal to the urge to confess.

May it not also be the case that at least for some of us who may authorize our own lives, whether in the form of lowly life-writing or full-blown autobiography, that shame is something we live beside, an aspect of our human condition that does not have a (conscious) centrality of place? An emotion that we seek neither to hide nor expose? We may seek reconciliation with those we have hurt (however indirectly), but it will not mean much to them unless our sentiments are backed up with something material. For Aboriginal Australians this must take the form of historical and legal testimony that ascertains the debt of white Australians owed to indigenous people for land appropriation and genocide.

Dalziell's discussion of shame in Australian autobiography stimulates thought about personal and political shaming experiences and responses. The workings of shame may be traced in the discourse of the powerful, in what national leaders choose to uphold and to conceal. But they are never called to task in this work which ends up with the view that the possibility of confronting shame is a positive feature of the ultimately humanizing art of autobiography "leading to a deeper self-knowledge and a greater recognition of shared humanity". Maybe. Maybe not.

Thea Calzoni is a community activist and writer. She was inaugural president of the LeftWrites Alternative Festival for Readers and Writers.

Life Stories

Laurie Clancy

Barry Oakley: *Minitudes: Diaries*, 1974–1997 (Text Publishing, $30).

Barry Dickins: *Articles of Light: Reflections on lowlifes, ratbags and angels* (Penguin, $22).

Donald Horne, *Into the Open: Memoirs 1958–1999* (HarperCollins $29.95).

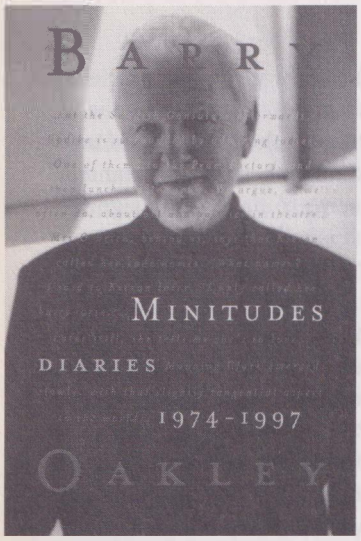
Brian Matthews: *A Fine and Private Place* (Picador, $27.41).

WHAT IS IT ABOUT AUSTRALIANS that makes them such compulsive recorders of their own lives? Autobiographies of various kinds proliferate in our culture and some of them sell very well. Bert Facey's *A Fortunate Life* and Sally Morgan's *My Place* sold in what is for Australia extraordinary numbers, without having received enormous promotion. There is clearly an audience for our stories. Is it because the history of (white) Australia is so short, so recent? Is it because the recording of unexceptional lives, lives that might be taken for granted in other, older cultures, seems to have some significance for a country which is still finding its feet?

At any rate, these four books illustrate something of the range and variety of autobiography. Donald Horne's *Into the Open* is very much a *public* memoir. As Horne points out, he has already written three volumes of autobiography. Although it necessarily records a few private facts, this book is much more a record of remarkable public achievement and a commentary on the nature and quality of Australian intellectual life. It does not proceed chronologically but investigates, in parallel and overlapping chapters, the different ventures of Horne's intellectual life. At various times he was editor of *The Observer*, editor of *The Bulletin*, creative director of an advertising agency, bestselling author, university lecturer, professor, chancellor, chair of the Australia Council and prominent republican. There are few areas of Australian intellectual life that Horne has not touched.

The best thing about it is that with a few exceptions – the rather boring chapter on his involvement with the republican movement, for instance – the book is unpretentious, interesting, sometimes witty and above all, free from the stench of self-extenuation, which is so often present in political, public memoirs and the reason why they are usually so worthless. The most disappointing thing about it is that, granted that Horne did not wish to write a straight autobiography, it is so weak on ideas and arguments, so strong on anecdote. Horne's guest list isn't as long as Oakley's but it's pretty extensive. Characters are introduced with the intellectual equivalent of name tags – "Peter Hastings, a gossipy and witty friend of mine", "Desmond O'Grady, a jobless Catholic intellectual". There are frequent shifts into the present tense, as if to highlight the frantic urgency of the author's preoccupations and labours.

There are lots of lunches, with lots of white wine. You start to wonder how Horne could have kept up the astonishing rate of intellectual production until he mentions the speed with which his books are written. He also documents carefully the numbers that were sold. It is a life of remarkable energy, variety and achievement. His major contributions to cultural life are his support for the idea of the republic, his grasp that Australia was becoming more and more irrevocably linked to Asia rather than Europe, and



his opening up of the pages of *The Bulletin* to, as he puts it, "women, city dwellers, young people, New Australians, Catholics, Aborigines, scientists, intellectuals, executives and dozens of other previously forgotten species". Against that, though, are his writing for cigarette ads, for NSW premier Robert Askin, for the DLP, and his obsessive anti-Communism. This suggests an intellect that is not so much wide-ranging as promiscuous. The slogan for Askin, a loathsome political crook of the highest order, was "With Askin you'll get action!" A better one might have been "Askin for trouble". He is reasonably proud of his co-editing of *Quadrant* magazine and doesn't seem worried about the source of its income. In an image more characteristic of Oakley he says, "Myfanwy [his wife] gave order to the handling of the proofs and correspondence, so there was that regular flow from the OUT basket that can be as satisfying as bowel movements". Perhaps the silliest thing he says in the book is that "I knew that one had to be careful with the idea of 'humanism' – because when one spoke of 'the human potential' it had to be admitted that Hitler and Stalin represented part of it". This is a grotesque and foolish representation of what 'humanism' means.

Towards the end of the memoir the tone does become slightly more personal. He begins to suffer from a life-threatening condition of fibrosis. He is seventy-eight. It is a tribute to Home's extraordinary energy that one frequently forgets that many of the campaigns he undertook were in his sixties and even seventies. The book could have ended here but in a strangely postmodernist scene his agent and publisher insist he write another chapter.

Horne is right, I think, when he says, "Much of the stuff I have written has hovered between what some general readers might see as 'academic' and some academic readers might see as 'popularization', a term used as if it meant reducing other people's more difficult and profound works to pap. Yet without what the French call 'high popularization' (much of which is 'original') shared intellectual life wouldn't be possible". Horne is, in his own words, "addicted to keeping the conversation going."

BARRY OAKLEY's *Minitudes,* with its deservedly modest title, is a selection made from the diaries he religiously kept: "Twenty-four volumes, hundreds of pages, thousands of days, hundreds of thousands of handwritten words." Oakley sets out their parameters very clearly in his preface: "these are diaries, not intimate journals. Their gaze is outwards. The inner life of the diarist remains largely untouched. This gives them an exteriority I hope I don't have in life. Tragedy isn't here, love isn't much here."

This is frank and honest, though Oakley does acknowledge one exception, which will be discussed later, but given their self-confessed limitations I have to wonder why a publisher would have been interested in them. They don't, as is claimed, "record not just the experience and consciousness of a significant Australian writer but the cultural life of the country during a period of enormous energy and change". Horne does that much better. What they do record is an almost endless succession of lunches, launches and lurches. Occasionally Oakley mentions the play or novel he is working on but we are likely to receive much more information about who attended its premiere or launch than what it is about. There is hardly any discussion of books in these diaries, merely on the social habits of and encounters with the people who wrote them. As an extreme example, Oakley confesses that he finds Patrick White's *The Solid Mandala* quite unreadable, "Banal and pretentious – the best bit of self-satire I've ever read" – but is later worried when he spots the great man on Oxford Street as to whether or not he'll be acknowledged. (He was, with a nod.)

Robert Graves says in *Goodbye to All That* that one of the necessary ingredients of a successful autobiography is the presence of famous people. *Minitudes* has famous people in abundance. Names do not so much drop as cascade: an incredible eight hundred or so contemporary Australians appear in the index. Occasionally he mentions a book he is reading but rarely what he thinks of it. The event, the occasion, is all. For Oakley, words are a device to keep life at a distance. As he asks himself, "How long can I get by on jokes?"

Only two concerns come up with any regularity. One is the idiotic Sydney versus Melbourne debate. The other is Oakley's religious faith and general political conservatism. Without sharing any of his be-

liefs I'm sympathetic to the determination with which he argues against fashionable but often unthought-out lines of leftist argument, what I'd call reflex radicalism. But what he offers in its place is not very satisfying. As his return to religious belief becomes stronger the life in his writing seems to diminish. He becomes a kind of died-again Christian.

In her review of the book in *ABR* Helen Garner said that she found the "self-conscious wisecracking", the "tablefulls of ghastly punning drunks" off-putting. In fact, I thought the wit was by far the best thing in it – almost the only thing, the section on his marital breakdown aside, even if its brittleness is tested by 320 more or less unstructured pages. Some of it comes from Oakley himself; some of it consists of wisecracks by other writers. Here is Morris Lurie, for instance:

> Carmel tells Morris Lurie she's doing an essay on Descartes for her Monash degree. "Descartes?" says this remorseless anti-academic. "I'd rather do nightcarts." I remind him of the time, when we wrote advertising copy in St Kilda Road, that I mentioned to him there was a biography of Erasmus just out. He raced over to the window, opened it, and shouted out to the building workers having a smoko in the courtyard, "Hey fellers! A new book on Erasmus!"

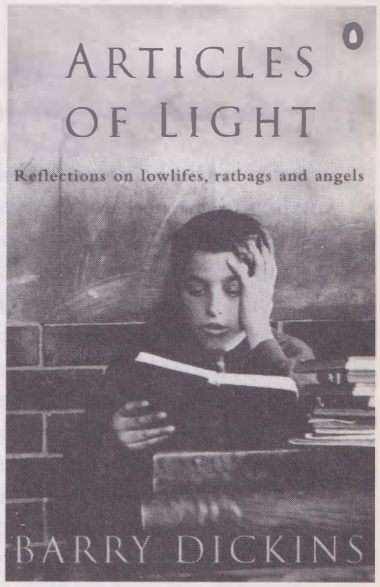
This is his account of meeting Xavier Herbert: "Shaking Herbert's hand was like pulling the handle of a poker machine – words came tumbling out like coins until you were knee-deep in them."

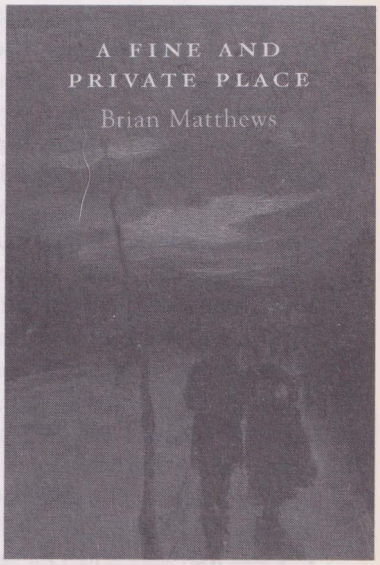
In 1981 Oakley's wife Carmel left him, telling him she was in love with a twenty-three-year-old public service clerk, who shared a room with one of his sons. The affair was brief and she soon returned to him but the experience was clearly a scarring one. Oakley's prose, which the blurb calls brilliantly minimal but which is better described as notational, doesn't change much but the pain and overwhelming sense of loss is palpable. A writer needn't and perhaps even shouldn't turn his pain into a public confession or performance but it is interesting to speculate on what kind of novel might have come out of that episode, which fortunately had its happy ending.

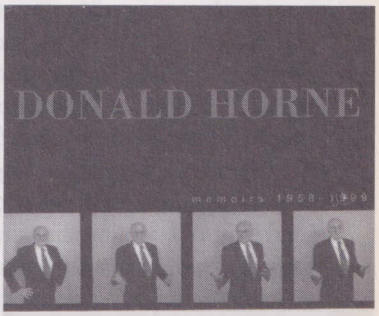
One last small point: there is a factual error in the book which is not the author's fault. He quotes John Timlin as saying that "he'd made a will, in which he left the four jokes to Laurie Clancy that he'd stolen from him for use in his last novel." Timlin has never said four things funny enough to make one of my novels, though Oakley does quote one: "Told them that on the St Vincent's application form, in the box marked Religion, I'd put 'Catholic (Practising)' in very large letters. 'That's because you've never mastered it', said Timlin."

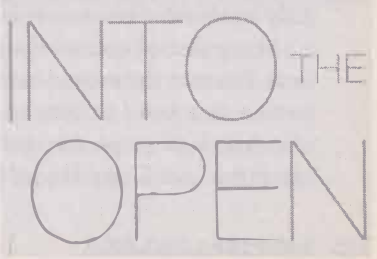
BARRY DICKINS features regularly in Oakley's diaries but the world he presents could hardly be more different. Dickins is a generous, decent, often entertaining man and these qualities come across in abundance in this collection of many of his newspaper columns over the past twenty years. Yet long before finishing the book I had begun to long for the edginess, the competitiveness, the malice, the one-upmanship of Oakley's anecdotes.

These are mostly journalistic pieces, what Lurie called in one of his books "hack work", interviews, observations, musings. Dickins' affection for Melbourne shines through, as does his interest in a wide variety of people, so-called









'ordinary' people. His love for his wife and child and the delight he takes in them is manifest and moving.

He talks to parcel deliverers, a woman who sells toys, a man who runs a funeral business, a solicitor, a woman who makes cakes. He takes his son to Angelo, "the lovely Fruiterer of Racecourse Road. We purchase our meat from lovely Guido, the friendly butcher."

Everywhere he finds peace and harmony. And yet everywhere he recalls a past that was so much better than the present. These are the two themes that dominate this collection. Parking attendants are our "brothers-in-Christ, the beautiful and graceful parking cops, surely the least loved and most misunderstood of our brethren workers". He listens to children and comments, "This is a children's chorus. I could listen to them forever. Perhaps I've forgotten how to be happy? You're easily redeemed, standing around children. They're so grateful to life." "Life," he muses, after interviewing the director of Bell Funeral Services, "maybe only funeral directors understand it." He talks to a nondescript lawyer and at the end says, "There's a toughness and an idealism behind the easy jokes and clever witticisms. I'd want Ken Beruldsen on my side if my day in court ever comes up again." Ray Martin is a lovely man. Dickins feels better after meeting Johnny Cash though Cash doesn't say anything interesting. Denise Drysdale is "Ding Dong: The Gloom-Buster!" Only the police fail to win his approval but more recently he has extended his beatific warmth to them as well.

There is much nostalgia here. "We used to go to work, then come back home and flake out. Now we work twenty-five hours a day." "I like Windmill and wish I was a child once again, I really do." He loves the old Red Rattlers. When he went to the cricket, aged twelve, he saw "a magnificent stadium stuffed full of gentle souls, all rapt in the cricket. No drunkards, and people politely saying 'Excuse me' as they hurriedly got to their pozzies." "Modern football", on the other hand, "is fascist. So is cricket." I wonder if he remembers watching football on tiny grounds, knee-deep in mud, with players who knocked each other out behind play, or standing three inches deep in piss at Victoria Park when one went to use the toilet. Dickins' vision of the past is a gentle, beguiling one. It also has only a tenuous connection with reality.

Many stories end with a kind of epiphany: "I believe I've met the most decent, honest, hardworking person in a year, or maybe even this life. Looking after kids is very special work." "They're special people at the Lost Dogs' Home & Western Suburbs Cat Shelter." The Travellers' Aid is "a good place. I hear faint and grateful snoring as I stroll to the lift and head for Bourke Street."

It seems churlish to bridle at such genuine generosity and at the wide-ranging curiosity with which he explores Melbourne and its inhabitants but as I read these pieces I couldn't help thinking of Oscar Wilde's comment about Dickens' *Little Nell*, that a man would have to have a heart of stone not to laugh. Dickins' heart is in the right place but his head seems to have gone walkabout.

BRIAN MATTHEWS' memoir is the one genuinely autobiographical work among these four. It's his lovingly recalled recollection of growing up in the Melbourne bayside suburb of St Kilda, of his relations with his large and complex family, and of the intimate connection of his life with the woes of his hapless Australian football team. It is, in other words, an example of what Richard N. Coe calls "the Childhood". It is a beautifully written book, totally unsentimental, even though it deals in areas where it would be easy to give way to sentiment, deeply sensuous in its remarkably vivid evocation of the St Kilda of 1936 to the mid-fifties, which is instantly recognizable to a Melburnian of roughly the same vintage. There are the brothels and the gangsters, Luna Park, the streets that betray their historical allegiances in their names (Inkerman, Alma, Balaclava) as clearly as does a man who signs his name Francis X.

Very few big names appear in Matthews' book. It is essentially an attempt to examine (and I suspect to come to terms in his own mind with) the relationship between his mother and father, and in turn his own relationship to both of them. The portraits of both are done with affection but in a manner that is scrupulously dispassionate and analytical. The love he has for them and they for each other is almost taken for granted. The compulsion he has is to understand and the study of his father and his life of mixed heroism and failure is movingly done. As with Joyce's 'Portrait', only what is strictly relevant is included.

Matthews' concentration on analysis is also felt in the carefully intricate structure of the closing stages of the book. Central to the ending is the one successful season St Kilda football team had when they won the premiership in 1966 by a point but fanatical football haters (who to my mind are as silly as fanatical football lovers) needn't worry. Matthews doesn't go in any detail into the match. Instead, it becomes a metaphor and occasion for the odd vic-

tory won out of defeat, and for reconciliation, in this case the healing of his troubled relationship with his father as the latter realises he is dying.

The book also deals with the death of the Matthews' third child, aged three weeks, from meningitis, and the shattering effect this had on the parents. (The book delicately implies that this was eventually, long after, the reason for the destruction of their marriage.) A few months before that occurred Matthews had shown me some poems he had written and in the lordly manner that one can have at twenty-two I told him they showed talent but that he hadn't suffered enough. He soon fixed that. He never held that piece of egregious folly against me but it's a remark I'll remember making until the day I go to my own fine and private place.

Laurie Clancy is a novelist and freelance writer. His most recent novel is Night Parking *(Bystander Press).*

Passion and Skill

Jenny Lee

Ken Inglis: *Observing Australia: 1959 to 1999*, edited and introduced by Craig Wilcox (MUP, $29.95).

THIS SELECTION OF Ken Inglis's shorter writings, each bracketed with a preface and afterword by the author, offers an accessible introduction to the work of one of Australia's most thoughtful historians. In form, the pieces range from occasional speeches through forays into high journalism to scholarly essays foreshadowing or reflecting on the intellectual concerns of Inglis's larger works. Their compass is wide, indicating the breadth of Inglis's interests (although unfortunately the Australian focus excludes any representation of his writings on Papua New Guinea).

Inglis's early interest in the social history of religion is represented by a virtuoso essay on Billy Graham in Australia, his work on the ABC by a speech to the Australian Society of Authors revealing the political cross-currents that beset the project. We read his probing summary of the issues raised by the desperate campaign to gain a reprieve for Max Stuart, an Arrernte man sentenced to hang for murder on the basis of a dubious confession. Inglis's enduring interest in national ritual has several chapters to itself – some full-dress academic essays, others written for the late lamented *Nation*. Apart from a perceptive essay on multiculturalism and national identity, many of the later pieces are in a retrospective mode: Inglis's reflections on the process of assembling the mammoth *Australians: A Historical Library*; the evocative valediction, 'Remembering Manning Clark'; and Inglis's uncharacteristically pugnacious 1996 Stephen Murray-Smith Memorial Lecture on the subject of Australian English.

In his introduction, Craig Wilcox quotes Manning Clark's remark that Inglis's mind "seems to comprehend every point of view". The pieces collected here broadly support that claim. Never one to rush to judgement, Inglis has maintained an inclusive stance on issues of cultural diversity at a time when other historians of his generation have raced to the barricades to defend an older vision of Australia. More than that, however, these essays remind us of Inglis's lively interest in the historical origins of everyday practices, his conscientious interrogation of official versions of the past. While younger historians might not always share Inglis's concern with issues of nation, they have much to gain from observing the passion and forensic skill with which he has run so many of our national myths to ground.

Jenny Lee teaches Professional Writing at Deakin University and is the Chair of overland.

When Angry Penguins Fly

Michael Ackland

John Miles: *Lost Angry Penguins: D.B. Kerr & P.G. Pfeiffer: A Path to the Wind* (Crawford House, $24.95).

THE ANGRY PENGUINS are often mentioned but too little discussed – unless of course within the context of the Ern Malley hoax. Their genesis, what they composed and actually stood for, are mostly forgotten, as are the works of their feisty leader Max Harris. Many factors have contributed to this neglect. First, the Penguins failed to match the polemical and creative brilliance of their principal adversaries: James McAuley, Harold Stewart and A.D. Hope, who constituted a triumvirate of aspiring Sydney poets determined to 'get Maxie' and prove their own superiority. Then there was war itself, which destroyed two key figures among the Angry Penguins: Sam Kerr and Paul Pfeiffer. Both joined the airforce and served in sup-

ply and surveillance roles. Kerr was shot down in 1942 in New Guinea while attempting to drop much-needed ammunition to Australian ground forces during an unscheduled fourth mission on a single day. Pfeiffer died more mundanely with the war's end in sight while serving as an instructor aboard a Short Sunderland flying boat off the coast of Britain. "To be young then", as Colin Thiele reminds us, "meant death" as well as promise – a promise that was abruptly terminated in the case of Kerr and Pfeiffer as were their efforts to promote poetic modernism in Australia.

Lost Angry Penguins attempts to render belated justice to the forgotten lives and writings of these young men. Its first 180 pages are devoted to their milieux and a further eighty pages to reprinting a selection of their poetry. Particularly striking, although John Miles does not make the point, is the parallel trajectory of literary modernism in Sydney and Adelaide. In both State capitals it was furthered by student coteries and undergraduate literary magazines, which had to fight for student funding. In Adelaide *Phoenix* turned to ashes under the heat applied by "sports heavies and engineers", only to be succeeded immediately by *Angry Penguins*, which was destined to achieve international notoriety. Miles offers an engaging personal tribute to two of its brightest sons and underscores their important contribution to intellectual ferment in Adelaide. The book, however, is not a portrait of an era, nor is it a probing psychological study. Suggestions of individual unease, such as Pfeiffer's unexpected failure of English Literature in his final school year, are hardly examined, and the criticism that the Penguins stirred up is neither cited nor discussed, but swept aside with generalities about local philistines. Similarly, Max Harris and Geoffrey Dutton do not emerge as distinct characters, though occasionally Miles captures aspects of a bygone age, as when he illustrates its innocent amatory rituals with lengthy quotations from the diary of Carys Portus.

Miles' other service is to preserve the poems of Kerr and Pfeiffer from oblivion. Poetry mattered to these undergraduates to an extent that is hard to imagine today. Donald Horne stood in awed reverence before McAuley's modernist compositions; Pfeiffer stated as an axiom: "Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge". Later McAuley would rail at the delusion and unashamed self-puffery of the Angry Penguins. Was he right? Harris's poems and criticism, I believe, merit serious reappraisal. But it is hard to share Charles Jury's proselytizing zeal about Pfeiffer's 'At the Window':

The last dismantled star flung into space,
In swift gradations
Night ripens into day.
Thought patterns flailed like octupus
Dichotomize.
Hen-coop cocks crow up the dawn . . .
"The guttural goose hath ushered in the day!"

This, according to Jury, is "a piece of perfect art. [It] seems to me to be of its length the best poem composed by an Australian that I have seen, and one of the best composed by anyone". Read on Jury, read on.

Sixty years on Kerr and Pfeiffer's works have not worn well. The immaturity of many pieces is patent, as is the influence of the Metaphysical poets. "Whom greater could we emulate than Donne?" Pfeiffer exclaims. Donne at least inspired him to produce a number of notable opening lines like "My love has bargained with a tear", "Bend your head of loosened hair" or "Come my love hold up your head / and let stars crown round your eyes". The pity is that Pfeiffer rarely sustained this level. The Second World War probably did not deprive us of two significant poets in these men, but their works still evoke something of the excitement, experimentation and turbulent mood of a young generation struggling to come to grips with Modernism and the prospect of impending apocalypse.

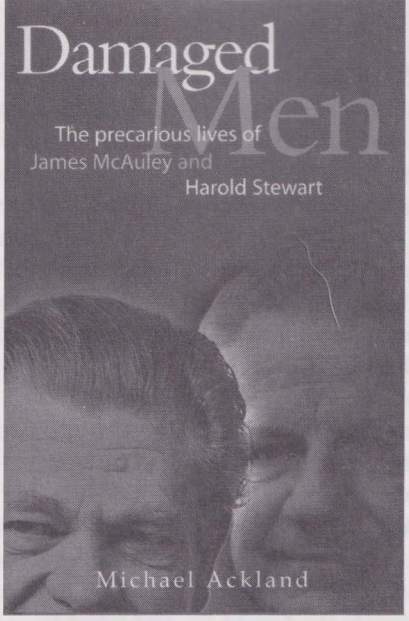
An Unlikely Synergy

John Miles

Michael Ackland: *Damaged Men: The precarious lives of James McAuley and Harold Stewart* (Allen & Unwin, $45).

McAULEY WAS a choir and alter boy as a child, dashing and awesome when a young man. He sought female conquests, was a strong Catholic by conversion. A beer and cigarette man with his life coming to an end in his fifties, he was "an Irish face mangled sorely by the hand of time". When he died his friends drank to him in warm Gaelic style.

Harold Stewart at age eight thought the Milky Way was God's backbone, as a teenager quietly browsed bookshops. He was a homosexual who became a Shin Buddhist priest and took up self-im-



posed exile in Japan. He forsook alcohol, always had a tobacco allergy, and lived to age seventy-nine. Upon his death he was remembered in an elaborate tea ceremony.

Both men were poets who always believed in their own ability. Both had such a fear of the work of 'ghoulish' biographers after their deaths, that they took steps to have juvenilia and other papers destroyed. One was fervently anti-communist and founded a Cold War-nourished, right-wing journal. The other, equally anti-Australian, became a recognized writer on Eastern religion and haiku. Being as alike as they were disparate, it is no wonder their names are linked for a most analogous, yet antilogous of reasons: the perpetrators of the *cause celebre* of Australian letters, the Ern Malley hoax.

It is not surprising then, that Michael Ackland begins his book with the Malley affair and chooses its title from a line of one of Ern's well-wrought poems: 'My blood becomes a Damaged Man'. That, however, is all that is predictable about this book on McAuley and Stewart. Combined or individually the two amounted to more than Malley, and Ackland shows this. McAuley and Stewart family papers as well as public records are drawn on, and a wealth of information presented. Skillfully handled, the picture given is one of antitheses in parallel whereby the pair do emerge as damaged – not flawed – men.

McAuley and Stewart's relationship began in the early 1930s against the backdrop of Sydney's then western suburbs; at Fort Street High, a school for gifted students. Lauded by their teachers but already showing divergence in their pursuit of the same poetic ideals, they went on to Sydney University's juxtaposed climate of the embattled avant-garde literary journal *Hermes* and the apathy and conservatism of the campus overall. During Fort Street and university years McAuley, in intellectual turmoil from early in life, was to win scholarships and awards while he "read himself out of Christian belief", a state he was to later uphold the sanctity of. Stuart, also in crisis from an early age, by comparison crashed academically while writing "parodic miniatures of the Ern Malley hoax", something so opposite to his later search for Unhindered Light.

Divergence and similarity continued. At university and during the first years of the Second World War both unabashedly aligned themselves with poetic and artistic Modernism. Then something happened: suddenly they saw Modernism as "once you get the knack, it's no harder than a free-association test". On an October afternoon in 1943 in an Army barracks, the two poet-conscripts set out to pluck the feathers of what they saw as the strutting Modernist bird pre-eminent: Angry Penguin Max Harris.

After the war, time took the two poets further along paths of parallel opposition. McAuley was to "have his spiritual destiny decided" while a frequent visitor to New Guinea and become an upholder of the West, the sanctity of Christian marriage, and academic office. Stewart turned to bohemianism, his own sexuality, rootless journalism and Japan where he was to find himself "beyond the wagging tongue of Ms Grundy". In final departure, they could only think of each other in terms of "Popish pomposity" and "having a hot-line to Buddha".

Damaged Men as a study of McAuley and Stewart is strongly psychological and has its implications. The hardships and the damage imposed upon two brilliant but unsatisfied minds could be seen as an indictment of the Australia of their time. The level of any society's ability to cope with its true poets, however, is shown as largely axiomatic. Poets are; to be so they can never fully attune to society's mores and thus rest easy at its bosom. Their calling is to go outwards on behalf of society, to look for something other than the readily available. Whether they find it or not is another story. But what they will do is record their search and that record is called poetry. McAuley and Stewart are not idealized in *Damaged Men*, but presented by Ackland as two alternatively praised and damned, happy and saddened, figures. Again in Malley's words, each was always "a black swan of trespass on alien waters".

John Miles is the author of two volumes of poetry, and his work has appeared widely in print and on radio, in Australia and overseas.

Mavericks of Modernism

π.o.

Fran de Groen and Ken Stewart (eds): *Australian Writing and the City* (ASAL, $25).

ONE OF THE TRAGEDIES of having an article published in one of those collections that are the product of a conference is that so few get to read them (outside the places where they inevitably got researched in the first place). One of the great pleasures of having an article published in one of these journals, is just how many *more* people get to read them who weren't there.

A case in point is the fabulous article by Phillip Mead in the refereed papers of the 1999 ASAL conference held at the New South Wales Writers' Centre entitled: 'Kenneth Slessor's Film Writing', which certainly fills in a vital link in our understanding of the advent of Modern Australian poetry. Or should that be Australian Modernism?

I always thought Slessor's "blinking", for example, in a poem like 'Rathtown' was inspired or directed by the poetics of Thomas Hardy (who wrote poems at the dawn of photography), but this apparently is not the case. Slessor's role as film critic at *Smith's* in 1929 coincided with the dawn of 'talkies' in cinema. He apparently collaborated on a film script with Norman Lindsay and has even been credited with creating *Smith's* own inhouse 'barometer' of film appreciation:

> AAA: The Gold Cup, *Smith's* highest award
> AA: The Bouquet. For outstanding excellence.
> A: Hand-claps. Good.
> B: The Bee. Average.
> BB: The Raspberry. Inferior
> BBB: The Fair Cow. Don't say we didn't wam you.

With – or rather after – Mead's research, Australian Modernism can take its rightful place alongside those other mavericks of Modernism (including James Joyce, who was also directly affected by the dawn of cinema). "At the beginning of Slessor's poetic career," as Mead put it, "a silent tableau of engravings; at the end, a set of moving frames".

Australian Writing and the City is a fabulous collection of essays, with contributions from Cheryl Taylor – 'Explorations in Australian Masculine Identity', Brigid Rooney – 'Comparing Gender, Socialism and the City', Julian Croft – 'Down (but not Out) in the City', and Ann Vickery on 'The figure of the Factory Girl in Modern Australian writing':

> *She lifted up her head to let me see*
> *A little rosy mark beneath her chin*
> *The mark of kisses. If her mother knew*
> *She'd be ashamed, but a girl-friend like me*
> *Made her feel proud to show her kisses to.*
>
> Lesbia Harford

David McCooey's explorations into the 'long poem' in 'contemporary' Australian poetry through the works of Laurie Duggan, Les Murray, Alan Wearne, Dorothy Porter and others had a good beginning, but suffered from one important absence: I (me:π.o). I was nowhere to be seen, despite Michel de Certeau (who McCooey himself quotes) saying in *The Practice of Everyday Life* that in the long poem 'walking' alters the notion of space and takes on a kind of 'rhetoric'. That very rhetoric he talks about is directly relevant to the first poem in my book *24 Hours* entitled (ironically) 'Walk' and 740 pages later ends with a found-photograph on the footpath. As David McCooey *did* say (and as he would no doubt like to have said about me): "This is a late expression of the modernist city, a model harking back to Walter Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire's city, where shock – the unpredictable, the momentary and the intense – is its condition". Nevertheless the essay had a lot of body and sustaining power to it.

Initially I didn't finish reading Leon Cantrell's Great Australian Literature Debate, 'Do We Have a Discipline?' because I thought it was a stupid question. Later, when I re-read it I only got half way through, 'cos it seemed to be just getting up to that part in literary practice where they are just about to Pose the Question, which in this case was how much damage English Departments did. Without reading on, I was certain I could have told him!

I'll finish off this review by saying a few words about Hazel Smith's 'From Cityscape to Cyberspace: Writing the City in Hypermedia' which was, I thought, a great place to have it published – i.e. alongside Mead's Slessor who it could be argued is, was, or could be considered a precursor to the little screen. Hazel Smith wants us to think in what she calls "screenfuls of writing" with metonymic links to other 'texts' and alternative pathways. Only "Every reader" as it turns out, has to start with "the first text"; i.e. eight directions and nowhere to go. Hypermedia, it

seems, doesn't only 'create' 'spaces' (as opposed to 'describing' them) but creates a space in which "the spoken is replaced by a visual performativity" – another nail in the coffin of orality, I guess.

One of the tragedies of small reviews is that not everyone in a collection of essays can get a look in, even when they deserve to – for which I apologize. On the other hand, one of the joys of reviewing is you can say what you want – which is what I've done.

π.o. is a Melbourne poet.

A Butterfly Nailed to the Page

Alice Healy

Moya Costello: *The Office as a Boat: A Chronicle* (Brandl & Schlesinger, $25.25).

Lau Siew Mei: *Playing Madame Mao* (Brandl & Schlesinger, $27.45).

Michael McGirr: *Things You Get for Free* (Picador, $20.80).

Keith McLeod: *Shore and Shelter* (FACP, $17.95).

I WILL START WITH Adelaide – my home city, the place that is designed so conveniently and symmetrically that it is apparently notorious for producing a certain 'squareness' in its people. Murray Bail's retentive character Holden Shadbolt is famous for this. Colonel Light designed Adelaide with the intent of making a prosperous place for the families, yet overshadowing his designs were the intentions of Edward Wakefield and the South Australian Land Company, formed in London in the 1830s. Paul Carter, in *The Road to Botany Bay*, has shown that Adelaide was promoted as a "self-regulating 'democracy' based on free trade". Its urban design explains this – the equal division of supposedly empty land justifies the use of the grid and recalls, as Carter claims, the paradigms of latitude and longitude.

It is no surprise then that Moya Costello, who grew up in Sydney but now lives in Adelaide, uses the urban geometry of the latter to background the daily survival of female workers in a bureaucratic structure which itself impedes feminine creativity, individuality and openness. Costello has called her first long fiction a 'chronicle', yet it plays on the idea of a chronological series of events. Rather, it chronicles a *process* of thought in a networked environment. There is a lyrical backward and forward movement in the prose, between the real and the surreal, practice and analogy, as Costello's narrator criss-crosses through her memories of the office, one of the ant-like commuters covering her "dreaming tracks" daily.

After a long dry summer, rains flood the city and the office of female publication workers dislodges itself from its foundations and floats down the river. Colonel Light apparently dreamed of sailing to the city's heart through a canal constructed from the port. In the glass ark the female types float in the opposite direction, towards the city's exit, the entry point to the rest of the world. They wave triumphantly to their male bosses Barry and Big Daddy, who are left on the banks of the Torrens. The women are leaving the grids of the city that pigeonhole their lives to enter the fluid open-ended ocean of St Vincent's Gulf.

There are some memorable and funny moments in Costello's work, reminiscent of Elizabeth Jolley's, especially in the surreal moments celebrating female domesticity in a masculine environment. They are paper-clipped by a series of sharp and witty reflections describing the day-to-day rituals of gossip, competition and domestic fetish. Audrey has a habit of hammering her editorial changes to a document with a nail, a visual pun that parodies the idea of completion and fixity, a vulnerable condition in a technological process-oriented environment. When her editorial is returned, the flaps of paper fall onto the floor like "dead insects". She promptly vacuums them up.

IF WE OBSERVE what is going on in any city in Australia we can see the tale of destruction and construction under the rubric of 'development'. Moya Costello trespasses over this rubric by describing the city's main roads as a series of arteries and capillaries. In *Playing Madame Mao*, Lau Siew Mei, a migrant to Australia, narrates a tale of modern Singapore. In her discussion of the essay written by Jorge Luis Borges in which he muses that the construction of a wall "casts its system of shadows over lands", Mei draws our attention to the tyranny of a capitalist world. The first Chinese Emperor Shih Huang Ti ordered the destruction of all historical documents preceding his reign and constructed the Great Wall of China. Destruction and Construction; the division of history from the present.

In the novel, Chairman Mao is the fictional leader of government. His ambitions are likened to the First Emperor – the desire for immortality and the control of history. Since independence, Singapore's government has been a democracy, yet it exists under the condition of a one-party state. Singapore's govern-

ment is orientated around economic imperatives. The recent cultural renaissance in this city does not escape these. As *Playing Madame Mao* implies, the official moves towards Singapore as a "creative society", luring professional and technological experts from overseas, is overshadowed by the strategic decisions of a director. These media-publicised manoeuvres are proof that Singapore, in its shimmering affluence, can produce the façade of liberalism, while strictly monitoring its effectiveness through policy agendas.

The novel describes this through the stage play of *Madame Mao*, Chairman Mao Tse-tung's famous wife, traitor and seductress. What is blurred is the role of each political side, perhaps purposely so, as the furry outline of the mirror motif encourages. As the actress Chiang Ching looks in the mirror she sees the outline of a fish, the symbol of perfection, and she knows that the mirror people are preparing to break through to overthrow the city. The mirror creatures have been trapped behind glass by the Yellow Emperor to imitate us eternally – forced to take on the identities of the watchers, agreeing with and justifying our every move. Ching's husband Tang has been detained by the white-coated government officials for writing a critique of the government in a Catholic journal.

In Mei's Singapore the 'I' is suppressed by the government's domination of the people, a people who grow fat and complacent in their containment. Mei plays on geography here – island, 'I'land; containment, subjectivity, nationhood. The 'I' being the subject which gazes from the mirror. The 'I' being the watcher in tum being watched. Being told what to think rather than thinking for oneself. Roxanne is Ching's journalist friend who muses that the actress yearns to be written about so that her identity can be pinned down like a butterfly, contained within the white cage of the page, an identity constructed by someone else.

Michael McGirr also discusses the situation of the individual in terms of its relationship to Christian morality. *Things You Get for Free* is an honest and insightful account of a Jesuit priest's physical and emotional pilgrimage through his past, reconciling his ambiguous relationship with his father and his tender gratitude towards his mother. The central idea in this memoir is encountered when McGirr visits the place of John Henry Newman, who was a convert to Catholicism in the mid nineteenth century and a great influence on McGirr's own brand of Jesuit thinking. The idea that "Christian teaching is not rigid like a building but grows like a tree" inverts the traditional authority of the church as institution, replacing it with the conscience of the individual Christian. As McGirr explains, Newman used the term the "aboriginal vicar of Christ", a problematic but provocative term these days, perhaps meant to represent a benign *native instinct*. It is a usage that is very much a product of its time in history, an observation about the shifting of language through the years.

Woven through the book is the narrative of McGirr's father and his illness induced by the notorious PCA relief drugs of the 1950s. This narrative is told in snatches in between the author's and his mother's journey through Europe and an essay on the ideas of the Jesuit order founded by Ignatius Loyola. It is as if these snatches mark various landmarks, like the Stations of the Cross, or the points of the mystery play, a procession that begins and ends with exits and departures. The trope of the suitcase and the layers of destination tags marking its exterior represent the accumulation of discoveries along the way.

KEITH MCLEOD'S *Shore and Shelter* also represents a pilgrimage – one man's search for the 'truth' about his recent and ancestral past. This novel is a product of its locality, the tradition of West Australian writing made famous by Tim Winton. It is a style that celebrates the beauty of the Australian landscape and the struggle of humans within it. Central to this is the importance of family while the male protagonists come to terms with their responsibilities as fathers, husbands or sons. In McLeod's novel, the link between Joe's obsession with the shadows of his past and his volatile family situation in the present is a little moralistic and nostalgic. His sympathy with the Aboriginal people and their deep connection with the rhythms of the landscape could be further written into the narrative. There is a lucid moment when Joe recalls his Dad's stories of an old Aboriginal fence-builder. In Joe's present the fence he built still stands – a metaphor of solidity, of permanency perhaps.

The drama revolves around a colonial woman's diary, a treasured document that Joe has inherited from great-aunt Lizzie. Joe attempts to fill in the gaps left by the stoic, descriptive prose accounting her daily life. He strives to "warm" the memory of his past and his ancestor's lives by stringing "little fires" from one event to the next.

On the whole I find the novel all too serious, like its main character. If it is meant to make us aware that we all live our lives on the surface and don't struggle to understand our past, especially on the issue of 'what happened two hundred or so years ago', then perhaps

it needs less subtlety in the narrative to shake us out of our complacency. Yet its strength is its account of the bloodied sequence of events of Joe's life from turtle fisherman to teacher. Joe is a man examining the shadows underneath his great aunt's stoic prose, like the ghosts of the turtle swimming in the shallows.

In all these works, the figure of the individual struggling to free itself from the hammer of institutions prevails. A butterfly that is pinned segment by segment to a white board may signal the construction of knowledge, but it also represents the constraint of a creature that in its very nature is essentially free.

Alice Healy is a PhD candidate in the School of Australian Studies at Flinders University of SA.

Subtly Assured and Satisfying

Ann Standish

Nigel Featherstone: *Joy* (Ginninderra Press, $18).

AT FIRST GLANCE much of the terrain covered by Canberra writer Nigel Featherstone in his second collection of short stories, *Joy*, seems somewhat familiar. Explorations of male homosexual desire, both realized and repressed, are played out against a recognizably Australian urban backdrop characterized by unsatisfied youth, popular music, casual drug use and confused spiritual belief. But out of this familiar territory comes a distinctive voice, offering unexpected insights into relations between people, and the varied forms they can take. Relations between fathers and sons; meaningful encounters between strangers and the need people have for other people, become the central themes in stories which are at times dark, although never as gritty or confronting as, for example, some of Christos Tsiolkas' work.

The situations through which these themes are explored are diverse. In the first story, an adolescent boy on a family camping trip grapples with growing up; the link between the beach and awakening sexuality so dominant in contemporary Australian literature given yet another twist as it becomes clear that the woman the boy voyeuristically observes and desires is a man. In another, a priest prepares to come out to his congregation, an act with repercussions beyond his own life. Others include a man in a dingy nightclub watching with jealousy and spite as his lover dances with a woman; a young man coming down from drugs driving around Canberra, ending up at the Aboriginal tent embassy; a man relating to his wife the experience of accompanying their gay son to Mardi Gras. All portray relationships which veer between pleasure and despair, often with sinister undercurrents of barely restrained violence, the implications of repressed or misplaced desires. Ultimately, it is a volume more sombre than joyous but nevertheless quite satisfying.

Joy avoids many of the pitfalls open to collections of short stories by a single author. The pieces are varied enough in intent and style to prevent the book appearing like a poor excuse for a novel. At the same time, there is enough congruence that they don't jar. The structure of the book, which has the ten main stories bookended by a split piece, adds to this sense of coherence, but it is also a result of Featherstone's assured writing.

Featherstone's depiction of Canberra and nearby bushland are particularly impressive. Settings and locations are clearly important to him, and he conveys ideas of topography and sense of place very well. His characterization is also successful, although best when conveyed through interior monologue as his dialogue does not always ring true. Overall, these stories are well crafted, and at times quite poetic and touching. This is enhanced by the subtlety with which they are told, a tendency to keep the reader guessing until, and sometimes beyond, the end. Occasionally the sense of mystery is overdone, leaving some issues alluded to so elliptically as to be almost lost, but generally it works to the stories' advantage.

Although these stories are shaped by a focus on male homosexuality (and women are peripheral, presented either as those to whom a story is told, or as objects of suspicion), this does not limit their appeal. Rather, they highlight the variety of ways in which people relate to each other; the different sorts of love which can exist and the difficulties involved. The final quote, many of which are scattered throughout the book, is Solzhenitsyn's assertion that "only human beings can feel affection for each other, and this is the highest achievement they can aspire to". Featherstone's stories reinforce the idea that while this may be the highest aspiration, achieving it is always going to be fraught.

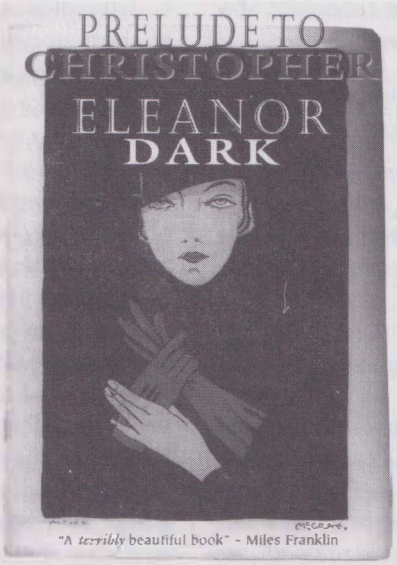
Ann Standish is completing a PhD thesis on British women's non-fictional writing about Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Heredity, Eugenics & Utopias

Michael Wilding

Eleanor Dark: *Prelude to Christopher* (Halstead Press, $19.95).

THE REISSUE OF Eleanor Dark's *Prelude to Christopher* restores to circulation a vivid, important and immensely readable novel. Often cited as one of the early examples of Australian Modernism, its shifts in time from the present of Nigel Hendon's motor accident to the past of the island utopia he attempted to establish certainly have their Modernist aspect. But the novel's Modernism resides less in any aesthetic or technical devices than in its presentation of modern attitudes to society and sexuality in conflict with the conventions and conservatism of the dominant conformity.



It is very much a novel of its time. The First World War with its appalling waste of life is ever present. This is one of those novels that records the social and mental dislocation resulting from the war, and that sees war as a product of a pre-existent endemic social and mental dislocation. It refuses society's salves of the elevation of patriotism and worthy sacrifice.

Central is that early twentieth-century preoccupation with heredity and eugenics. Nigel's utopia was one in which the mentally and physically fit were to be bred. Tragically, he marries Linda, whose family history is 'tainted' with insanity of a particularly violent, homicidal nature. The specific eugenic concerns may now seem dated, though they are not: their assumptions lie unchanged behind contemporary genetic engineering theory and practice. The preoccupation with dormant, hereditary insanity waiting to emerge, however, has the note of late nineteenth-century Modernism: Ibsen's *Ghosts* haunts the novel.

Then there is the melodrama of the mad scientist, going back from Wells' Dr Moreau through Stevenson's Dr Jekyll to Mary Shelley's Dr Frankenstein. Nigel is a doctor obsessed with the idea of eugenics. But there is also Linda's truly atrocious scientist uncle who gloatingly charts the recurrence of homicidal craziness on the family tree, exempting himself but marking down his niece. And here we move into family psychodrama, Dr Hamlin standing each night at the foot of pubescent Linda's bed, watching for craziness and remorselessly destroying her sleep and stability and confidence. The sexual suggestions remain just that, suggestions, implicit. But Linda's later propensity for taking lovers and for being a bad wife, as the locals see it, externalizes the sexual tensions into a portrait of early twentieth-century modern woman, emancipation in the context of a repressive community. Barbara Brooks' brief afterword on the feminist and the Gothic is excellent. (She notes that Dark asked her agent to send a copy of the book to Bette Davis.)

Eleanor Dark's later career, and the destructive harassment she and her socialist husband received from ASIO, have associated her with the left-wing tradition of Australian writing. This early work, her second novel, however, is very much a middle-class affair. The lower orders are shocked at the goings on, overinterpret them with a seedy sexuality, and talk in funny accents. However, the social conservatism is not a matter of class or of age, it is pervasive. Nigel's mother, old, bourgeois, represents the traditional values of a dead society. But Kay, the twenty-year-old nurse who falls in love with Nigel, is no less narrow and conventional in her vision. The young of the new generation are as benighted as the old in Dark's bleak analysis. The book's title is grimly sardonic.

I first read *Prelude to Christopher* when I was researching William Lane's New Australia movement for *The Paraguyan Experiment*, since it had been suggested that Dark had Lane's settlement in mind. But the focus of Nigel's utopia is eugenic, not communist, and the political and economic basis of it is never examined, beyond passing assertions of Nigel's dictatorial rule. It finally erupts with a mass uprising and murder, whereas Lane's experiment ended without violence. Dark's novel is not an allusion to Lane's experiment except insofar as both utopias failed, giving a pessimistic vision of mankind's ability ever

rationally to improve society. The dominance of the conformist and unthinking over the individual and the visionary is the book's final note.

P.R. Stephenson first published this novel in 1934, when established publishers shied away. He then went bankrupt and half the copies were seized. Rigby reissued it in 1961. In the 1980s I remember contributing to a *Bulletin* feature on books that should be reissued and suggesting *Prelude to Christopher* should be, but it wasn't. At some point Virago was going to reissue it, but didn't. At last it is has reappeared, and once again it has been a small, independent publisher, Halstead Press, that has brought it into print.

Michael Wilding is a regular overland *contributor.*

A Spirited Narrative

Laurie Hergenhan

Michael Wilding: *Raising Spirits: Making Gold and Swapping Wives* (Shoestring Press & Abbott Bentley, $29.95).

WHAT KIND OF BOOK is this? "A piece of esoterica designed to startle and delight the modern reader", says the *UK Economist*. "The occult" was the too-hard basket the *Australian Book Review* used.

The book tells the story of Dr John Dee, a late-sixteenth-century mathematician, and the seer Sir Edward Kelly, both famous historical characters in the England and Europe of their time. Together they pursue the dangerous art of alchemy, raising spirits who instruct them in secrets of the universe and warn of apocalypse. From England they travel with patron, Count Laski, to Poland, where they seek out King Stephen in Krakow and the emperor in Prague. Suffering from lack of money, ill health, and various entrapments and plots, they are expelled and flee to Count Rozemberk in Southern Bohemia. Spied upon by various parties, alternatively courted and disowned by powers that be, they weave their difficult way.

Wilding's narrative is based on voluminous historical sources: Dee's diaries, especially a 'secret' one, confidential records and spy reports. Dee's colourful story has been much written about by scholars and sensation mongers. Though Wilding quotes swathes from the obsessive Dee, thankfully he does not quote all. He sparingly interpolates wry asides and speculates to fill gaps but leaving much unresolved, playing on uncertainty, a trademark of his fiction.

In Henry IV an exchange goes something like this:

> Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep.
> Hotspur: But when you call them will they come?

Dee and Kelly have no trouble, engaging apparitions in long discussions reported in excruciating detail. If the spirits are garrulous, Dee always has "one question more". It would be easy to pass this off as delusion, a mix of credulousness and projection, but for Dee it is his most urgent reality. He is both not of this world but very much of it.

If Dee is not a prodigal fictioneer, he is a marvellous reporter. So Wilding traverses familiar territory but exploring it in new ways. Fantasy and reality take strange forms and indeed division breaks down. There are waves of fear – or is it paranoia? The spying is real enough – by the secret service of Elizabeth, the Pope's and Fugger bank's, not to mention central European potentates. The very spirits are ambivalent . Kelly experiences "realistic paranoia", and "it may be that spirits can be paranoid too, and appropriately so". Who can envy the harried and hunted Dee and Kelly in this 'on the road' – and off it – narrative. Dee was even invited to the court of Ivan the Terrible.

If the "end and the beginning remain obscure", so does the transmutation into gold and the wife swapping. The latter is "the great set scene . . . a reflection of amazing events, but are these angelic visitations or our own obsessions? This is the story everyone tells. Yet we know nothing about it. Where do you start?" What, then, do we have in this book? An historical narrative straight from the records, science fiction, faction, a novel, a work of research, a treatise on the occult? The book strains the categories of writing and experience, as do all Wilding's fictions, but in new ways. And is there some allegory or fable lurking there? – in the quest for secret, empowering knowledge that will rock the world, while credulous and rival power-players (as with ASIO antics) vie for its possession, using repression and espionage.

For readers who enjoy the offbeat, the fabulous and the political, who aren't put off by esoterica, and can do without erotica, this remarkable book – so unremarked in Australia – is for you.

Laurie Hergenhan recently announced his retirement as editor of ALS. *Along with Frances De Groen he is editing the selected letters of Xavier Herbert.*

Write through the boundaries

Kerry Leves

Paula Abood, Barry Gamba, Michelle Kotevski (eds): *Waiting in Space: An Anthology of Australian Writing* (Pluto Press $21.95).

"WHILE THE ERASURE of diversity remains a feature of the Australian literary canon" (I quote the preface) "many 'expressive voices' go unread, 'waiting in space'." Not good news about "the Australian literary canon", which I'd thought to be *in medias res*: isn't 'the canon' being revised, added to, unmade and remade, even in the face of the Howard government's educational reductionism? Oppositional reading and writing (and publishing) isn't unheard-of beyond the bounds of this book, and is surely necessary.

This new anthology, *Waiting in Space*, collects fine work by Australian writers of diverse cultural and language backgrounds. It's been edited to expand and complicate a reader's view of "cultural diversity" and its expressions. The texts here can be read against the grain of the preface, with an eye to the manifold ways in which their thematics, wit, imagery and syntax (for instance) seem to link them with literary work being done outside the boundary of 'difference'. Or they can be read to follow the grain, with an intention to notice differences of (for instance) tone and emphasis, and to construct a space from which 'canonical Australian' writing might be freshly considered.

But the preface tends to go overboard: "looking for the expressive voices of the other is an act of resistance against the monolingual nation". I surmise 'monolingual' in this context refers – perhaps – to the simple self-identifications with groupthink promoted by the languages of advertising, coalition politics, media shock-jox. I have no way of being certain; and whether interpreted on the terms I've suggested, or literally, it's hardly a 'monolingual' nation. However, the medium of this book is English.

The preface may be tendentious, but the writings it introduces provide far more captivating entertainment. They're bold, fierce and finely-tuned. Some have been adapted from performance texts delivered at theatre-based events under the aegis of *Xtext*, "a journal formed to develop interchange between different communities of artists, activists and workers." The performative aspect is underscored by what seems a consistent attention to lucidity and pace.

The book opens with a tour-de-force: Andrew Ma's 'The Colonel's Daughter', a prose-paean to KFC, in which orality (eating, speaking) and consumer protocols (deciding, deferring) subsume romance in an acne-scape of gridlocked propriety. Ma's enjoyably woeful tale blends ingenuousness with sardonic *chutzpah*. In contrast, Nasrin Mahoutchi's story, 'The Big Iron Door Banging', about women bathing in an Iranian prison *hamaam*, unfolds its time like a darkening rose: tender and sensuous memories of childhood bathings overlap a brutal and peremptory 'now'.

Maori writer Jean Riki sets Kafka brooding over contemporary Sydney, the pre-dawn subways and late-afternoon parks where dispossessed people speak alterities over botted cigarettes. The dreamings of possible 'homes' are constructed as casual, everyday. There's the narrator's, "Aotearoa, Maui's fish, te ika a Maui, that floats in the blue warmth of the Pacific Ocean . . ." and her park-bench interlocutor's: "See, when a blackfella looks at the land, he doesn't see a loaf of bread that he can cut up with fences or nuthin'. When he looks at the land, he sees his mother . . ." Their interchange suggests absence and displacement as a substrate of living, while a busking trumpet player "blows Spanish-inflected lines" and "the wind begins to lift autumn's skirt of leaves from one side of the park to the other."

Benjamin Hoh's 'Eva' ("extra-vehicular activity") constructs an urban future at once affectless and driven-by-affect: its kinesthesic undead ("I'm zombie. Are you zombie?") romp in scary playgrounds: gutted shopping malls, subways, a ruined Chinatown. Hoh's story unfolds its dystopic visions from inside the head of one of the participants (thus foregrounding the binary – one person's dystopia, another's utopia).

Good poetry lurks among the stories. Brendan Phelan's poems unmake/remake poetic and other discourses with clarifying succinctness. Alissar Chidiac's poems put their feet on Palestinian soil and walk, finding in prickly-pear a spiky, fleshy, proliferating metaphor for borderlines, instabilities, people. Lena Nahlous' 'Talking in Silence' may be story, prose poem, or performance text, but it undoes, with surgical clarity, the dumbdown whereby helping-profession English mantles its clients in otherness. Romaine Moreton applies a magical-realist technique (poetically suspenseful, like Katherine Anne Porter's short prose) to a story of Aboriginal cultural imperatives that engages like a gothic yet opens space

for thought (what does it entail, to possess your 'soul'?)

And these are only a few. Twenty-eight writers have contributed to *Waiting in Space*, a collection that delivers on its press-release ("new book pushes boundaries"), re-inspires faith in writing and/or knocks (one's) socks off.

Kerry Leves is a NSW poet. His regular poetry round-up will return in overland *164.*

Martin Bryant's Lunch

Ken Gelder

Shane Maloney: *The Big Ask* (Text Publishing, $27).
Kerry Greenwood (ed.): *On Murder: True Crime Writing in Australia* (Black Inc., $21.95).

SHANE MALONEY'S NEWEST Murray Whelan novel continues to walk the mean streets of inner-city Melbourne, beginning with colourful events unfolding at the Victoria Market early one morning. Whelan is not really a private detective: his day job sees him as a political minder for the State Labor Party, which spirals him into shady deals, thuggery and standover tactics, and the occasional bit of slap and tickle (some of it unwanted, some of it yearned for). Every crime novelist must have an angle. For Maloney, this is supplied by sleazy Labor Party right-wingers and union affiliates – in this case, powerful trucking union bosses – who think only about getting maximum results the fastest way possible. His thrillers in this sense are disenchanting about the Left, seriously so. The only Liberals to make it into this novel, on the other hand, are comically and stereotypically kinky.

Murray Whelan may take his name from a famous company of wreckers, but he isn't a tough guy. He is doggedly determined but generally incompetent, blustering through events and coming out on top because of one sheer coincidence. Although not a detective, he does owe a little to Chandler's Philip Marlowe who was equally unable to fathom clues and was mostly passive in relation to the machinations around him (although Maloney never blames the woman). In terms of the grander narrative at work about the failure of contemporary Left politics, Whelan again has little to offer: his future as a politician at the end of the novel is only promising in its relation to the spectacular failures that surround him, but it may be better left unwritten just in case.

In fact, apart from his sexual longings, his main character trait is sentimentality, mostly expressed as fatherly concern for his prodigal son, Red. Structurally, this gives Maloney a chance to draw some Melbourne/Sydney contrasts, with Whelan's upwardly mobile, Chanel suit-wearing wife migrating to the latter and Whelan stubbornly staying put. But sentimentality alone is not enough for the thriller – in particular, it sits awkwardly with the more brutal doings required by the genre. A good comparison would be the American crime novelist James Lee Burke's hero Dave Robicheaux, whose sentimentality is made to crack when his wife is murdered in one of the earlier novels: that is, where sentimentality and brutality collide. The biggest threat to Red in Maloney's novel, on the other hand, is a mother's ambitions and a Sydney boarding school.

Crime fiction is often a stylish genre: preferring the first person, it can become a virtuoso performance linguistically speaking. Maloney is no exception, using puns, metaphors and alliterations as part of an overall comic/larrikin effect reminiscent of the early 1970s novels of Barry Oakley. High-minded literary critics can thus speak up for crime fiction without appearing to slum it. On the other hand, true crime writing is generally very badly written indeed: the junk end of the crime literature market. But true crime writing can be both lurid and investigative in the best sense: drawn rationally to the most horrific of events and pursuing that rationalism right down to the wire. It can appear in the best literary magazines, as well as the most squalid paperbacks.

Unfortunately, some of the pieces collected in Kerry Greenwood's *On Murder* are neither rational nor well-written. Michael Gawenda's long chronicle of the Port Arthur massacre begins by wondering what Martin Bryant had for lunch – as if a detail like this might somehow illuminate something. The irrational author follows the irrational killer in this account, with Gawenda's investigation devolving into the blandest clichés ("The dead are many") and platitudes about the risks implicit in 'popular culture', as well as the usual nonsense about 'our' national character ("We remain a mild and tolerant people", etc., etc.). Helen Garner's piece on the murder of the young child Daniel Valerio – one of several pieces on child murders – is equally facile. Few readers will deny that Garner writes beautifully; but this essay is a shameless exercise in sentimentality, against

which the parental self-lacerations of Murray Whelan pale into insignificance. Like most contributors, Garner takes the victim's side and berates the "bureaucracies" (especially the legal system) for muddling the proper cause of justice. I found the contrast to Garner's *The First Stone* striking here: this earlier book famously scolded young women for being too bureaucratically active, for being too quick to run to the police for help – while the essay on Daniel Valerio finds the 'passivity' of Valerio's mother utterly inexplicable and complains that officials were not involved enough! The essay closes with clichés that even crime fiction wouldn't use, about the "deep fears within ourselves", the "worm in the heart of the rose", and so on.

Thankfully, most contributors stick to the idiosyncrasies of their particular case studies which, after all, is what makes true crime writing interesting. John Bryson is here, on another well-known mother-and-child story; there is also Lucy Sussex's fascinating historical piece on the 'baby farmer' Frances Knorr, and other, more moralizing accounts of child murders, something of a preoccupation here. On very different cases, writers such as Mark Whittaker and Jane Cadzow show us how close good true crime writing can come to crime fiction, especially through keeping the brutal and the sentimental mutually buoyant so that the one never smothers the other. Perhaps these two kinds of writing are destined to remain utterly conscious of each other: many pieces here similarly affect a first-person, hard-bitten manner and enjoy a crisp parting shot ("I hope someone cares" or "He never got to keep that, either") in the manner of harder boiled crime novels. Lindy Cameron's essay, 'Meaner than Fiction', labours the point that true crime writing really is different – but this only shows how little she knows about crime fiction these days. Some of the contributors think that true crime writing must only be about cases that are never resolved: as if this in itself is 'truer' than fiction. The paradox is that true crime writing, confronting the unresolved and inexplicable, then surrenders itself up to mystification and enchantment: Garner's worm in the heart of the rose. For the disenchanted, at least, there is always crime fiction.

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The Harm inside your Mind

Michael George Smith

Stephanie Luke: *Harm* (Wakefield Press, $19.95).

THE SYDNEY-BORN, Adelaide-based writer Stephanie Luke is a young woman who has experienced what is probably best described as late-onset schizophrenia, a mental condition once called Dementia Praecox, literally 'the Madness of Youth'. Luke has been lucky. She has come out the other end of her 'episode' to not only speak coherently about it but with a quiet eloquence and subtle lyricism that makes this novel a timely and necessary insight into a condition so little understood. It announces the arrival of an important new voice in Australian literature.

More than 160,000 Australians endure this much-maligned and misunderstood condition, and that number is increasing annually by around two thousand souls, both male and female. The number might actually be higher, since no-one knows precisely how many of the young people who are committing suicide in such alarming and increasing numbers have actually been tipped over the edge by an undiagnosed case of schizophrenia. That *Harm* is written in a sense from within the experience of a psychotic episode makes it a significant addition not only to the Australian literary canon but to the socio-psychological one. And it does so on an intensely personal rather than jargon-laden analytical level.

Subtitled *A memoir of dark, glorious days*, the experience of Luke is told through Anna, whom she describes in her introduction as "the centre of me, someone who has the ability to break out of this body and tell a story of visions with all their psychotic fictions and terrible truths." That said, the book is no mere exercise in faction. Luke brings all her imaginative powers to bear on the creation of a small but significant 'supporting cast' of characters not only in terms of their impact on and perception of Anna, mentally and physically, but also with individual internal lives of their own, whether 'normal', like Anna's girlfriend Sarah and sister Lucy or the ultimately even more 'damaged' Jacob, a gay work friend who transforms, as the story progresses, from something of a potential boyfriend/lover into mentor/saint, for Anna at least, through certain actions that seem to imply an increasingly pure, monastic asceticism, into, finally, a 'sinner' with a very different and chilling potential.

Jacob comes closest to fulfilling the schizophrenic's potential for suicide as he slips further into his own 'psychotic episode', though ultimately his rage is externalized rather than internalized. Despite moments of despair where Anna internally screams pleas for self-immolation of one kind or another, she recognizes she is incapable of killing herself. Two peripheral characters in the novel actually take that ultimate way out, and in the case of one, Lisa, who overdoses on sleeping pills, the suicide manifests in her mind as one more 'crime' of which the increasingly paranoid Anna believes she is guilty. Suddenly even watching the news on the television becomes dangerous as, Sarah notes, Anna starts to see that "all human tragedy was directly attributable to her".

The problem for Anna becomes how to "interpret the signs correctly". She knows the voices are pointing her towards her destiny but they can be so perversely obscure. She hears clues on the radio, sees signs in car tail-lights and license plates, but all too often they seem to lead to dead ends, some benign, others potentially dangerous. At one point Anna takes herself to the beach to listen for the messages in a spoken-word performance broadcast on JJJ by one of her favourite contemporary artists, the splenetic American singer-songwriter Henry Rollins. Her ultimate reaction to his 'messages' is a stark reminder that the audience of artistic expression may not be capable of surviving the confrontation. Rollins' words mortify her: "In a few seconds my world has collapsed with the revelation that I am a whingeing, whining, indulgent, pathetic woman of nearly thirty . . . (too) scared to move in case I make more mistakes . . . thanks Henry. What do I do now?" Others experiencing Anna's internal tumult might have picked up a gun, or a bottle of pills. At the other extreme, one journey "in pursuit" of an "obvious sign" ends with Anna allowing herself to be defiled in the grossest possible way. Yet what can she do? At one point she says to herself, "I have to stop having doubts about the universe."

There's a certain irony too in reading of Anna's faith in her voices. After all, in another age, that faith might have been perceived as 'possession by demons' or being in touch with angels, as happened with Joan of Arc six hundred years ago. Today, it's all too easy to dismiss mental anguish as 'attention-seeking' adolescent tantrums. Anna's sister initially sees things that way, and her girlfriend Sarah isn't initially sure whether this is just Anna's way of breaking up their relationship. The problem is distinguishing where a person has crossed that boundary between what we assume is reality and madness. *Harm* is, again, an all too timely reminder of just how difficult it is for those on the outside to recognize that a friend, a lover, a sister or brother has crossed that boundary and is slipping into a psychotic episode. Where Anna experiences signs and symbols, Sarah perceives anger and vindictiveness. Anna's determination to 'cure' herself is only finally overcome when she proves to Sarah, Jacob and Lucy that she really is at the point of doing herself harm, and when she accedes to their requests, she actually does seem to find some sort of peace in an 'open door' mental institution. But even after the worst of the crisis has passed and Anna has submitted to taking medication to stabilize her mood swings, her response to others continues to be fraught and guarded. Once she leaves the institution and is seeing a new doctor, after deciding he is not the sympathetic soul she first imagined, Anna opts to "play the role" she perceives she must, to "sit and answer his questions prettily and put him at ease."

Perhaps *Harm* can help teach a few of us a little more about the realities of this condition and allow us to develop some of the understanding and compassion needed to help those who find themselves, like Anna, assailed by "a thousand chattering sounds bearing in on her," unsure if this really is "God whispering", to help get them through the experience without causing themselves and those who love them too much harm.

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A Rich Tradition of the Poor

Colleen Z. Burke

Hugh Anderson: *Farewell to Judges and Juries: The broadside ballad and convict transportation to Australia, 1788–1868* (Red Rooster, $95).

FAREWELL TO JUDGES AND JURIES at 611 pages, is a mammoth book. It contains Hugh Anderson's painstaking research, over a period of twenty-five years, when he looked at 100,000 broadsides in libraries and repositories throughout the English-speaking world, ably assisted by his wife, Dawn.

According to Anderson the rich broadside tradition, based on street ballads, has long been ignored

by historians studying convict transportation to Australia. This book aims to remedy the omission by giving a human 'folk' dimension to the subject by printing verse text (and where possible tunes) of approximately 140 transportation broadsides.

Anderson, the author of over thirty books, mainly in the folk tradition, is also a publisher. This book is the culmination of work begun in *Farewell to Old England* (Rigby, 1964), which contained thirty-seven songs and broadsides. However, these were not restricted to the convict system and transportation as they included some on emigration and gold digging and several were taken from newspapers. They also came only from sources within Australia.

His overall aim in this book is to present the broadsides as rewarding evidence in their own right for Australian, British and Irish historians. Obviously not every broadside ballad is included and the author has held over all material relating to Wales for a separate publication.

Anderson has also used extracts from personal stories of convicts contained in letters, diaries, chapbooks, reminiscences and books to give context to the broadsides and deepen the background.

Further documentation is available in the notes on sources, which make interesting reading in their own right, and in the bibliography. Another pleasing feature of the book is the total of more than 150 illustrations, including the artwork of headpieces, and reproduction of drawings and engravings.

In his introduction, Anderson has tried to survey and consider most of the books and articles dealing with the broadside industry, and with convictism, and in the foreword has included relevant extracts from Henry Mayhew's *London Labour & the London Poor* (1881–2), to as he says "help the general reader better understand the place of street ballads in British and Irish social history".

In his section on London street ballads and singers Mayhew compares contemporary ballad singers with minstrels:

> The themes of the minstrels were wars and victories, and revolutions; so of the modern man of street ballads. If the minstrel celebrated with harp and voice the unhorsings, the broken bones, the deaths the dust, the blood and all the gory and circumstances of a tournament – so does the ballad-seller with voice and fiddle, glorify the feelings, the broken bones, the blood, the deaths, and all the gory and circumstances of a prize-fight . . .

Broadsides were generally written on topical themes:

> The printers like hanging subjects best and I don't. But when any of them sends to order a copy of verses for 'Sorrowful Lamentation' of course I must supply them. I don't think much of what I've done that way . . .

To receive payment the balladist had to write about popular topics such as hangings and transportation. A regular street-ballad singer bemoans the poor pay:

> I write most of the Newgate ballads now for the printer in the Dials, and indeed, anything that turns up. I get a shilling for a "copy of verses written by the wretched culprit the night previous to his execution.". . . I have written the lament on Calcraft the hangman on the decline of his trade and many political songs. But song and Newgate ballad-writing for the Dials is very poor work. I've got five times as much for writing a squib for a rag-shop as for a ballad that has taken me double the time.

The subject matter of broadsides was therefore dictated by the printer and public demand. There was also a store of standard images, phrases and refrains available to the balladist. Unlike the singing of ballads, publication of broadsides assumes a literate audience. It was a period of transition when oral traditions and written texts co-existed.

This rich collection includes evergreens such as 'The Black Velvet Band', 'Ten Thousand Miles Away' and the 'Donohoe' ballads as well as a swag of lesser known broadsides.

A serious omission is a scholarly discussion of the broadside tradition. While it is illuming to reprint relevant sections of Mayhew's text, the reader needs to understand the broader context. Such a discussion and summary is surely integral to an authoritative work of this nature.

Anderson's inclusion of large prose extracts from relevant contemporary sources (rather than highlighting the context and life of convicts) sometimes clutters the text, making it difficult to understand. Chapters would be easier to access if they were preceded by short explanatory notes. This is particularly so in chapters dealing with political prisoners from England, Scotland and Ireland. Scrolling through notes at the end of the book often brings clarity, which is why they should be condensed and used as introductory pieces.

I'm puzzled by the fact that in the main text Anderson hasn't attributed 'The Cyprus Brig' and 'The Convicts Tour to Hell' to 'Frank the Poet', but only attributes authorship in the notes. His publishing company, Red Rooster, published *Frank the Poet* (1979), the seminal book on Frank MacNamara, by John Meredith and Rex Whalan. Their ground-breaking work established MacNamara as author of these and many other convict ballads.

In the notes I found an error about the Fenian escape from Fremantle on board the American whaler the *Catalpa*. Anderson names John Breslin as one of the six rescued Fenians, instead of Robert Cranston. In fact Breslin, the commander of the operation, was in Australia to oversee the escape and was on board the *Catalpa* on its return to America.

Obviously some errors and structural faults are to be expected in a work of this magnitude. However, while sometimes annoying, they do not detract from the book, which reflects Anderson's lifelong interest in the subject of transportation broadsides. But adding short introductions to chapters and being a bit more selective with prose extracts would have made the book easier to read and absorb. The size and weight of the book is daunting; the spine started to tear when I initially glanced through it.

This book is a welcome addition to scholarly works about transportation broadsides, but whether or not it will become an important text for Australian, British and Irish historians studying convict transportation remains to be seen. However, it will give enjoyment, as well as a greater understanding of Australia's convict era, to those who take the time to delve and read, but more importantly recite, or even sing, the many broadsides contained within.

Collen Z. Burke is a Sydney-based writer, poet and critic.

Roosting High, Crowing Low

Christopher Lee

Hugh Anderson (ed.): *Two GoldFields Balladists* (Red Rooster, $25).

Hugh Anderson (ed.): *Eureka: Victorian Parliamentary Papers Votes and Proceedings 1854–1867* (Red Rooster, $49.50).

Hugh Anderson (ed.): *Baronet or Butcher? The Trials of the Tichboume Claimant* (Red Rooster, $49.50).

THESE THREE NEW publications from Hugh Anderson's Red Rooster press build upon his invaluable contribution to our understanding of colonial Australian cultural history. Anderson is well known for his monographs on colonial ballads and his series 'Studies in Australian folklore'. *Two GoldFields Balladists* is the eighth in the latter series and returns to print the work of two interesting nineteenth-century balladists.

A brief introduction gives a scholarly account of the available biographical information on both balladists with an account of the bibliographical history of those poems previously collected in book form. I would like to have seen this account extended to include a broader historical contextualization of the work and perhaps an appreciation of their social, cultural and political character.

The first of the balladists collected is William Coxon, whose *Coxon's Comic Songster* was published in Ballarat in the middle of the nineteenth century. According to the original subtitle, the collection of ballads is "full of pungent parodies, quaint quizzicalities, odd oddities, local hits, colonial sayings and doings . . .". Coxson's songs are intended to be sung and the sheet music is included at the end of the collection. These songs are eclectic: some archaic; others historically topical. 'The Good Time Coming', for example, is a jolly piece of sarcasm which systematically works through a list of the diggers' personal flaws and pet hates. The singer expresses the doubtful hope that all will be remedied when the 'good time' comes:

There's a good time coming boys,
A good time coming;
Squatters shan't permitted be
To o'er run this colony,
In this good time coming.
Then bullock drivers shall not swear,
Or taste a drink that's stronger
Than ginger beer when on the road –
Wait a little longer.

It is an interesting and characteristic set of loathings which anticipates the Sydney *Bulletin*'s *bette noirs*: squatters, judges, politicians, Chinamen and new chums. Not all the songs connect to a set of values consistent with radical working class republicanism, however. 'Dear old Home' expresses an ambivalent lament for the old country which could just as easily be sung as a parody:

It's true we have gold-fields, where chaps make piles,
And squatters, whose stations and runs run for miles;
But though out of fields here, the gold's got by pounds,
They're not like the old fields we crossed with the hounds.
Home, home, dear old home, they hunt kangaroos here
Like foxes at home.

Coxon's topics range widely over every day colonial issues and represent an interesting indication of popular attitudes. Other subjects include 'The Ballarat Man', 'The Flash Colonial Barman', 'The Melbourne Shopman', '[Multicultural] Colonial Barbers', 'The Flash Colonial Barmaid', and my favourite 'The Grog Tent we got Tipsy In'. Throughout there is a wry appreciation of the hardship of life on the diggings and of the many conmen, rip-off merchants and 'disreputable' women who lay in wait for unsuspecting new chums. The popular imagination on show in the *Coxon's Comic Songster* is well and truly racist, misogynist, and largely wanting in solidarity with its fellows.

E.J. Overbury's *Bush Poems* is the second of the goldfield balladists in the collection and well represents the moralistic preoccupations of the English (as opposed to the more rebellious Irish) ballad tradition. A number of Overbury's ballads demonstrate the lack of originality of much of Lawson's work in that form. Overbury is continually reminding his readers of the ways in which itinerant bushmen are stripped of their earnings by unscrupulous publicans and he never seems able to resist exposing the moral failures of the victims. 'The Public by the Way', 'The Wallaby Track' and 'Jack and I: A Phase in Colonial Life' all deal with this theme. Throughout there is a nostalgic lament for the lost innocence of childhood and frequent contrasting revelations of the paucity of humanity in a postlapsarian colonial world. The independence of the working man and the complexity of class associations are apparent in a number of the poems:

There are many who'll stick to the stations,
But with sovereign contempt will refuse –
Though they get better wages and rations –
To work for the poor 'cockatoos'.
But still, when the harvest is ready,
There are hundreds to reap, mow, or stack;
For a month or two keeping quite steady,
Forgetting the Wallaby Track.

Overbury's glimpses of class conflict, however, are often subverted by his moralizing.

The other two Red Rooster publications are quite different books. *Eureka: Victorian Parliamentary Papers Votes and Proceedings 1854–1867* and *Baronet or Butcher? The Trials of the Tichbourne Claimant* are collections of historical documents on topical colonial events. Books of this sort rarely have a large popular market but they are invaluable research and teaching tools for anyone professionally involved in the area. The collection of popular responses to the Tichbourne case includes "2 confessions, 6 comic books, 53 ballads, and 2 vocal albums" and represents an exemplary instance of the ways in which the diverse array of popular cultural forms available in the period were able to disseminate public controversy. Both these later books are worthy additions to anyone's university library and all three provide enthusiasts as well as scholars and students with fascinating insights into the social, cultural and political history of the period.

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Why so Serious?

Harry Garlick

Connie Healy: *Defiance: Political Theatre in Brisbane 1930–1962* (Boombana Publications, $21.90).

DID BRISBANE HAVE a New Theatre? Did it have a Unity Theatre (a designation which appears to carry its own political agenda with it)? Very few people living today would be able to answer those questions from their own experience, and if you were guessing from a knowledge of present-day Brisbane, then the prevailing petit-bourgeois materialistic conservatism of the city would lead you to the almost certain conclusion that such a politically active theatre would never have existed for long in Brisbane. After all, the last vestiges of a continuing politically active theatre here, the Popular Theatre Troupe started by Richard Fotheringham et al, whose dying gasps for an audience were sustained by massive efforts from Errol O'Neill, passed away in the early eighties. *Defiance* gives us an answer to many of those questions.

This book, whose subtitle is *Political Theatre in Brisbane, 1932–1962* (although the final chapter does

extend the history to the present), gives us a chapter or two of an all-but-forgotten piece of Brisbane theatre history; an account of the shaping forces and development of politically radical and workers' theatre. It outlines how the WEA, the New Theatre, the Unity Theatre and the Student Theatre all began, how they cross-fertilized, blended, merged, and drifted apart.

The book's title, *Defiance*, suggests a theatre movement adamantly maintaining its principles against powerful social and political constraints. It is a title that will appeal immediately to all left-leaning readers, for, taken with the cover photo of an injured trade unionist at a demo being succoured by his mates, the title lets us know more or less who is being defied, yet there is not much evidence of this defiance in the book itself. What we do get, after tracing out the beginnings of agitprop theatre, is a brief survey of the New Theatre movement in Australia, that sprang up in the 1930s to use art as a weapon, and as a way of reflecting the lot of Australian workers. (The two were not necessarily the same.) In spite of the rise of cinema, the writer argues that theatre at that time was an effective platform through which to disseminate ideas. With the decline of theatre's popularity, however, and the safe bourgeois policy of Australian commercial theatre, the dissemination of ideas from workers' and student theatres seems essentially tribal, with the audiences consisting chiefly of the converted. Healy's description of the English play *Six Men of Dorset* could fit much of the kind of theatre that she writes about. She labels it a "serious didactic drama in three acts aimed at a working-class audience, with its themes of unionism, mateship and solidarity." She continues: "'It was a rather dreary play,' one of the players recalls, 'but we had an established audience after *Waiting for Lefty*.'" In the annals of agitprop and workers' theatre, plays that involve the audience as directly and as closely as Odets' are regrettably the exception rather than the rule. With the background of Irishness that many of the Australian workers could claim, one would have thought that a play like *Easter 1916*, about the rebellion in Dublin, and focusing on the execution of the Irish patriot James Connolly (he was executed by the English while still too weak to stand from his wounds; they simply sat him in a chair and shot him) would have been a landmark in the Brisbane theatre. According to the stage manager, it was "the only real disaster . . . a good play . . . required more ability . . . both in staging and in acting". I am unfamiliar with this play by the Englishman Montagu Slater, but wonder whether it did depict the actual way in which Connolly died. Presumably since the Black and Tans would unerringly have been identified with the forces of oppression, the Brisbane performances must have been monumentally bad to have received such criticism.

Defiance began its life as an MA thesis, and in its transition from thesis to book it appears to have brought with it its thesis style: much of the writing falls into a formulaic style of the kind required by academe, but which non-academic readers could find tedious. It provides a relatively straightforward and unadorned account of the time it spans; a local history of a kind dealing with what we today would probably call some of the 'little theatres' of Brisbane, and outlines in some detail their repertoires. Such information is plainly vital to the theatre historian trying to reconstruct a complete picture of the Brisbane theatre scene, but the account is unleavened by much anecdote or personal memoir. That Healy had available the option of utilizing anecdote and memoir if she so chose is evidenced both by her preface and by an interview with her in the *Courier-Mail* of 2 September, in which she cites a couple of anecdotes, which she does use in the book: namely, the threat to her job when as a seventeen-year-old she took part in the show *Cannibal Carnival*, and the story from her husband Mick about the piano being repossessed in the middle of a concert performance. Bearing in mind that this is an insider's version of this piece of theatre history, one might have hoped for more such anecdotes, which would have certainly enlivened the telling of her story.

But the style of this work also raises another, more general question: why are so many accounts of left-wing movements and actions always so serious? Does a commitment to left-wing causes mean that a sense of humour, of wit, has to be left in the closet? Is it an overhang of soviet influence that because comedy is by its nature subversive, no comedy can be allowed to taint or threaten a serious work? Do we have here a seriousness so high that even a High Victorian would fail to recognize it? A clue to the reason why this kind of writing is limited may be found in a response to one of the New Theatre's post-war productions, Ted Willis's *God Bless the Guv'nor*: "some people in the left-wing movement decided that it was too critical of the working class . . . if it was not strictly on the 'correct political line' it shouldn't be played." Yet the fact that humour could aid a cause is shown in the very material that Healy writes about.

And certainly my recollections of the Popular Theatre Troupe are that their satirical items were always their most successful with audiences. The success of *Reedy River* should perhaps have alerted these theatre groups to another shortcoming in many of their productions, namely that political propaganda and agitprop pieces are usually much more effective theatre if they include music and song. With the middle-class origins Connie Healy ascribes to the Popular Theatre Troupe (the term 'middle-class' seems not quite to elicit her approval), this is a facet of performance that they did not overlook.

Another example that readers of this journal will be familiar with is the recent writings of that life-long old lefty, Merv Lilley. Almost all of the prose pieces that he has written for *overland* in the past five years have been characterized by his own wry brand of humour.

Still, Connie Healy began to research and to write her thesis only after she retired from a full working life. To have gone that far bespeaks a prodigious energy and commitment to her task; to have followed that with the further effort of turning that thesis into a book speaks even more of her dedication. She is now seventy-seven years old. One must be grateful that she has recovered these forgotten and important chapters in the history of Brisbane theatre at all. And if my guess is correct – that her writing style was in the first place (and unfortunately, the last place) determined by its thesis origins – then we must lament that academic demands have deprived us of the full richness of her vision. I for one certainly hope that she is even now in her spare moments speaking her recollected anecdotes into a tape recorder, so that they can be edited into the book's second edition.

Harry Garlick taught literature for a number of years at the University of Queensland.

East Timor Reviewed

Sean Butler

Rowena Lennox: *Fighting Spirit of East Timor: The Life of Martinho.da Costa Lopes* (Pluto Press, $29.95).

John G. Taylor: *East Timor: The Price of Freedom* (Pluto Press, $30).

Sarah Niner (ed.): *To Resist is to Win!: The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmào* (Aurora Books).

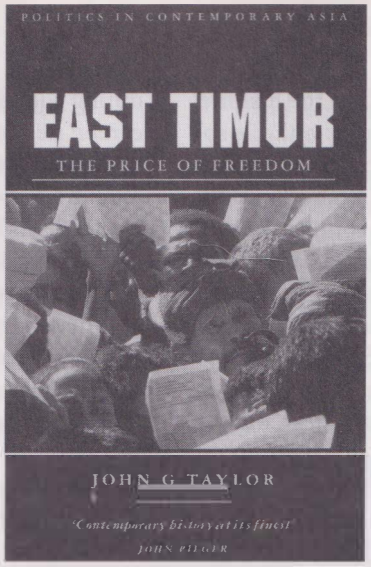
IN THE SHORT TIME since the 1999 popular consultation was held in East Timor a wave of publications on East Timor has emerged onto the market. Former spies, aid workers, representatives of solidarity organizations and university academics saw a market opening and leapt in. Even former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, who spent a few days with the occupying INTERFET forces, reeled off his experiences in book form.

Not all recent publications however, have sallied forth in such blatant opportunism and vainglory as Fischer's. Many, particularly those by individuals personally involved with the Timorese people, are the culmination of years of practical work and study undertaken when East Timor was not the cause celebre it is today. Three such books are reviewed here. In different ways, these books challenge our assumptions about East Timor and demand that we appreciate the struggle and stories of the Timorese people.

Martinho da Costa Lopes was the first Timorese leader of the East Timorese Catholic Church. Dom Martinho, who held the post of apostolic administrator of the diocese of Dili, served until 1983 when his exposure of human rights abuses in Timor saw him slandered by politicians in Australia, forced to resign his post by the Vatican, and sent into exile in Portugal. Lennox's comprehensive research investigating the life, and ultimately the death of Dom Martinho in 1991, demonstrates a long standing passion for East Timorese history. Through the frame of da Costa Lopes' biography, Lennox skilfully uncovers new insights into Timorese history. For instance, while briefly explaining Dom Martinho's education in Macau during the Second World War, Lennox glances back to East Timor and looks at how the war was affecting the Timorese people. She points out that Australian and Allied troops firstly invaded neutral Portuguese East Timor, were beaten back by the invading Japanese, and subsequently bombed Dili and its civilian population to tatters. This is not a history we have heard in the popular media.

It is pithy snapshots of Timorese society like this which provide the book with its real strength, as politics and histories of East Timor are brought into relief by Dom Martinho's life. In addition to this Lennox's finely honed storytelling skills combine with the biographical content to create a book which is a pleasure to read.

Unlike Lennox's easy, sometimes poetic style, John G. Taylor's political history is an exercise in clear, precise and comprehensive analytical study. In *East*



Timor: The Price of Freedom Taylor displays his exceptional insight into the realm of Indonesian politics and the machinations of the Indonesian military (TNI), as well as his excellent grasp of internal Timorese politics. This allows Taylor to bring to light some of the best evidence yet published of the TNI's control over Militia groups and their involvement in the campaign of violence in the lead-up to and after the 1999 ballot. The campaign, called Operasi Sapu Jagad, was, Taylor claims, designed to "portray East Timor as a territory racked by civil war and thus incapable of self government, to sabotage the referendum, and to eliminate local leaders of the independence movement".

Taylor's firm grounding in post-Second-World-War politics positions East Timor in relation to Portuguese and Indonesian colonialism, military dictatorship, and genocide, each of which he locates in relation to local Timorese political developments on both the left and the right. Furthermore, by analysing the specific economic, political and strategic interests of the US and Australia, not least of which were vast natural resources and deep sea channels vital for US nuclear submarine movement, Taylor explains twenty-four years of international indifference towards East Timor and active support, by both the US and Australia, for the oppressive military regime.

Less densely packed with information, *To Resist is to Win: The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmào*, combines two broad sections, firstly, Gusmào's autobiography covering the years from his birth until imprisonment in 1992, and secondly, a collection of speeches and writings by Gusmào selected and edited by Sarah Niner. Gusmào's autobiography, written in secret during his incarceration in Cipinang Prison in Jakarta, provides an insight into the life, attitudes, politics and growth of Gusmào himself. It also grapples with the inner workings of Timorese society from Portuguese assimilationism to the growth and internal development of the Independence movement, although notably the narrative sidesteps Gusmào's centrist role and the purging of 'radical' left-wing elements. Gusmào's stories of his early years, education, and his role as a guerilla fighter, when read with the documents collected by Niner, provide an excellent resource to contrast with the distanced political analysis of books like Taylor's.

The collected documents form an invaluable resource for those seeking to study Timorese history, particularly the latter period of the independence struggle when CNRM (Council of National Maubere Resistance) and later CNRT (Council of National Timorese Resistance) attempted to gain international support. The reproduction of the documentation is, however, problematical. Nowhere is it adequately explained why the documentation focuses on the later period of the struggle to the detriment of our understanding of its earlier phases. Why were documents written by Gusmào during combat in the mountains, which he refers to in his autobiography, left out of this collection? What reason underlies Niner's decision to choose certain documents over others? Were there problems of availability, translation or time? This collection of documents would be assisted by an explanation of the political and historical circumstances of their production and their reproduction in this book. Despite this the collection is strong, interesting, and at times poignant.

Today, under United Nations Temporary Administration, the struggles of the East Timorese people continue. The physical aspects of twenty-four years of genocide may have ceased but the liberty of the Timorese people remains notional. Under UN administration Timorese people are largely excluded from administrative and governmental positions, from being actively involved in the local economy through employment or through Timorese enterprise. They are seeing their culture threatened while their infrastructure and assets are distributed to offshore business monopolies. This, as with all the history of East Timor, has a great impact upon the lived experiences, cultures and social interactions of 'ordinary' Timorese people, and yet these are the people most excluded from the published discourse on their history.

While the books reviewed above are amongst the best to have emerged in recent time, they maintain an historical focus on the lives and actions of either the Timorese middle class or the educated and political elites. This is no doubt a problem of timing and access to sources, but as decades of social and cultural history has shown these problems can be

surmounted. Where, one might ask, are the histories of women, workers, the rural poor, rank-and-file soldiers, and the illiterate? More importantly, where are the histories being made useful to the Timorese community? It can be hoped that in coming years, as both Timorese and international writers are able to delve into the depths of East Timor's past, present and future, that we will see a scholarship on East Timor which is respectful, open, free and exhaustive. This scholarship must involve, at all levels, an appreciation of those people excluded from the current middle-class, bureaucratic and elite discourse of Timorese politics, economics and history.

Sean Butler worked with the student movement in East Timor in August 1999.

A Melbourne Modernist

Mark Dober

Dick Wittman: *William Frater: a life with colour* (MUP, $76.95).

WILLIAM FRATER WAS a Melbourne modernist painter. While he occupies a secure niche in the history of Australian art, and is duly represented by a painting here and there in State gallery collections, he is an artist who has perhaps faded from public recognition. The first full biography of the artist, *William Frater: a life with colour*, by Dick Wittman, aims to correct this situation and make the artist better known and appreciated. It's a shame that the book's price tag places it out of reach for many would-be readers.

The book is in three sections. The first and largest section is a biography of the artist. Frater was born in Glasgow in 1890 and studied painting in his home town before emigrating to Melbourne in 1914. For some time he continued to paint in a Hugh Ramsay-like tonal manner. His work then underwent a profound change when he adopted the lighter tones and brighter colours of post impressionism. The artist stuck with this style for the rest of his life painting portraits but mostly landscapes. For at least as long as the interwar period Frater played a leading role in introducing Modernism to Melbourne.

In a descriptive sense this biography is interesting and informative. We learn much about the goings on and politics of the Melbourne art world during the interwar period and about Frater's later career: he taught at RMIT in the 1950s and became president of the Victorian Artists Society in 1964. In 1966 he was honoured with a retrospective at the National Gallery of Victoria and shortly before he died in 1974 the principal gallery at the Victorian Artists Society was renamed the Frater Gallery.

The second section of the book consists of a discussion of each of the thirty-two colour plates. Again, the writing is essentially descriptive with some details about the painting's exhibition history and the responses of contemporary critics.

The final section of Wittman's book is an essay-like summing up of the artist's achievement. However, it is not easy to make a strong case for William Frater because the work still looks (as it did to many critics of the time) too derivative of post impressionism, Cezanne in particular, and somewhat mannered. However, the pendulum ought to swing back more in Frater's favour: that the artist is not even mentioned in Ian Burn's excellent survey of Australian painting, *National Life and Landscape 1900–1940* (1990) is odd.

I would like to have seen a more substantial attempt by Wittman to address questions of meaning in Frater's work: does the artist make use of metaphor; what human meanings are there in the work for a contemporary audience? Instead, the author labours the argument that Frater, being a Modernist, was 'progressive' while his detractors were 'conservative'. This is a Modernist perspective on art and is somewhat simplistic and self serving. Art is about much more than 'progressive' changes in style. Moreover, why should we identify with this argument today when the Modernist idea of progress is now well and truly passe? We need to make a clear distinction between originality and content on the one hand, and the latest trend on the other, for the two need not coexist. Clearly Frater made an important contribution to Australian art in terms of introducing a new style, but questions remain as to whether his work was either particularly original or had substantial content.

Ultimately, the only way to make a new assessment of Frater's work is to have a carefully selected retrospective at a State gallery. Niagra Galleries in Richmond, Melbourne, put on a modest sized show of Frater's work in 1990 and the colour catalogue remains the best visual survey of the artist's paintings.

Mark Dober is an artist. He lives in Melbourne.

Nipping at Powerful Heels

Vane Lindesay

Reg Lynch: *Bulk Reg: A cartoonists collection* (Pluto Press, $24.95).

Bob Ellis (poems) & Bill Leak (cartoons): *The Ellis-Leak Almanac: 2000 AD* (Pluto Press, $19.95).

Hinze: *Hinzebrand: Political cartoons in brine* (Scratch Media, $19.95).

PUNS IN PRIMITIVE SHORTHAND best describes *Bulk Reg*, a collection of around 1000 'cartoons' by Reg Lynch, self-categorized as unpidgeonholeable.

For the most part his humour is based on the play on words – an example, a few diagramatic lines suggesting a man holding a telephone with a finger in a pizza captioned 'Dial-a-pizza'. The appearance of these is little more than an echo of old-time vaudeville stage acts where the 'Lightning Sketcher' as he was billed, addressed sheets of paper on an easel and sketched a circle adding four or five strokes then turned the image upside down to present a caricature of some notable person, or some pun based on a subject topical at the time. Entertaining but ephemeral to a degree.

And so, one can only wonder, what happened to classical draughtsmanship, sound drawing, and why Daumier, Goya, Forain, Gulbransson, Phil May, David Low and Will Dyson, among other masters of caricature, took the trouble to draw when in journalism everywhere today, the 'doodle', uninspired or otherwise, is uncritically welcomed.

Two other Australian cartoon collections, one a selection of the work produced by David Pope (better known as 'Hinze' in the radical press) and the other, the work of multi-award-winning artist Bill Leak. Both plainly declare here we have two cartoonists with the skill and respect for the tradition of their craft.

Bill Leak's explosive cartoons meet with the verse of man of letters Bob Ellis to form a clever, satirical view of Australia during the first year of the twenty-first century. This *Almanac 2000 AD*, presented by two of our most creative talents opens thus:

On this, the last leap day these thousand years,
The fireworks faded from an empty sky,
We look back on a summertime gone by
And wonder what became of our millennial cheers.
A time of tax, and little Aussie bleeders
Hurling tampons at poor fraught John Howard,
A rain of blood beneath which, as he cowered,
He learned, or it was told him by Pru Goward,
How gender politics might hurt the man,
So one must blame Mike Wooldridge when one can.
A time of special courts and special pleaders
For Laws and Jones and Rose and Doug Moran
Who seem to need, like all or nation's leaders,
A justice greater than the common man.

The combined work of Ellis and Leak truly define that rare quality in Australian humour – satire, wit with a wince.

Political Cartoons in Brine is a new collection selected from the labour movement and alternative press. Their originator David Pope, who for an admitted silly reason signs his work 'Hinze', presents ninety pages of soundly drawn political comment. The point is emphasized here as there are practitioners who claim the idea is more important than the drawing: others insist that a sound, strong drawing can only fortify and enhance an idea. David Pope's work unfailingly declares sure drawing skills, and concepts, the products of a professional with a perceptive keen mind concerned with pertinent issues political and social only, always nipping at the heels of the powerful.

Pope recently said of his work: "The thing that really makes you angry is say, after the waterfront dispute in 1998, the government can basically back a scab workforce to replace an existing workforce and sanction the use of mercenaries trained overseas and guard dogs in a military style operation, underwrite it with $250 million and after all that it can be so quickly forgotten and the government can get re-elected. That gets really so frustrating that you want to remind people that Reith is the guy who sent in the dogs.

"I think we cartoonists would love to think that our cartoons were so sharp and clever that they forced those in power to resign in disgrace. But of course they don't, and that's not where the power of cartoons lies. For me, a successful cartoon is one that people involved in campaigns find uplifting or useful."

This collection goes a long way to this end.

Vane Lindesay is a Melbourne designer and writer.

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overland
the massacre of australian history

The Massacre of Australian History features a long essay by Ray Evans and Bill Thorpe rebutting the *Quadrant*/Keith Windschuttle version of Australian History. The authors focus especially on the erroneous claim that massacres of Aborigines were few and far between. They have compiled an overwhelming amount of disturbing and graphic empirical evidence about the massacres and the essay will be a crucial moment in the ongoing Reconciliation debate.

The Massacre of Australian History includes the second *overland* lecture, by *Gangland* author Mark Davis, on the flip-side to the massacre of history: the necessary renewal of Australian cultural life. Davis has much to say about how we are to rescue cultural debate and political life from the cast-iron assumptions of economic rationalism.

The Massacre of Australian History also contains three responses to Robert Manne's *In Denial*, his controversial essay on the Right's denial of the veracity of the Stolen Generations report.

Also featured:

- Bob Ellis's withering response to Michael Warby's biography of Ellis and its litany of errors;
- a previously unpublished story by the seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Jolley, written after her attendance of a Hitler youth camp in 1939;
- Cassandra Pybus reviewing the latest round of novels from some of the big boys of Australian letters: Carey, Moorhouse, Hall;
- more dirt on an ASIO dobber.

The Massacre of Australian History also contains *overland*'s regular selection of high quality poetry, stories and an expanded 32-page review section.

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