overland

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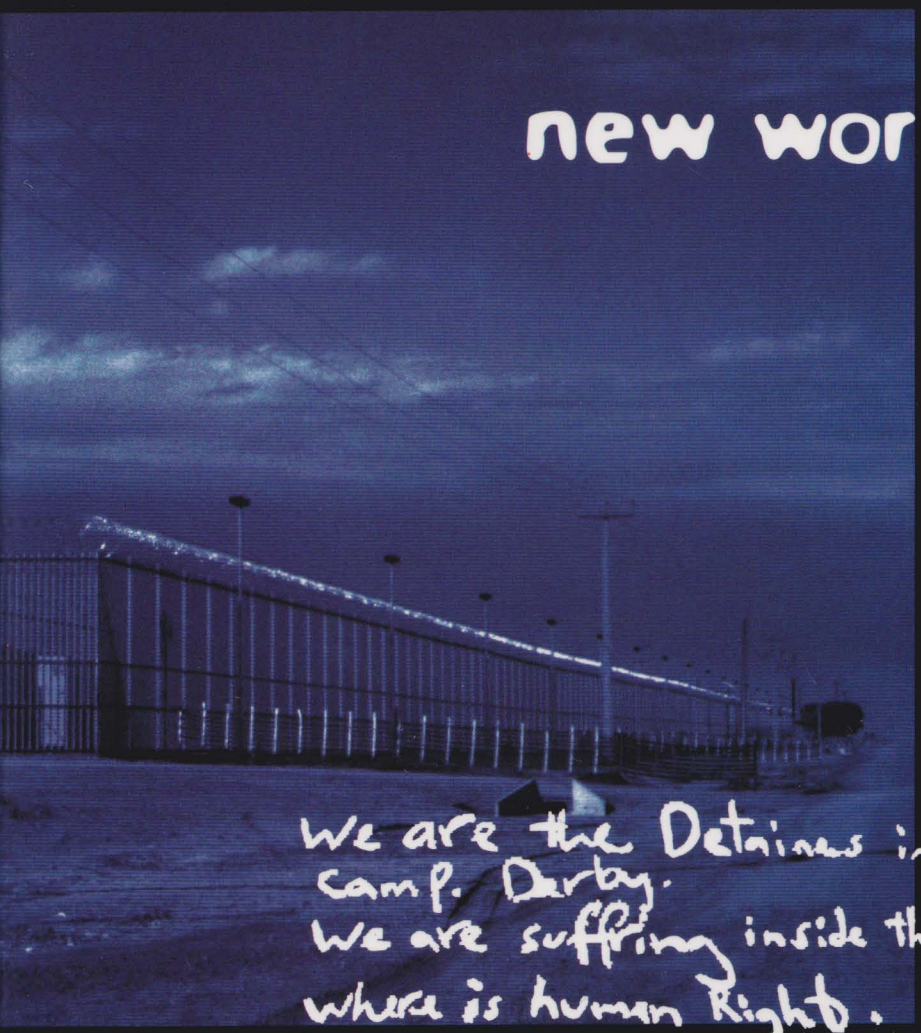
new world borders



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overland

Temper democratic, bias Australian

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ARTS VICTORIA
Australia Council for the Arts

WE GET A LOT OF MAIL at the *overland* office. Most of it we are pleased to receive: positive feedback, suggestions, reminiscences, manuscripts, subscription cheques and so on. Some of it makes us laugh, like the article submitted suggesting that Aborigines had only been in Australia for six hundred years and for which the author swore he had received encouragement from John Howard; or like the response by ex-subscriber John Birrell, the retired Police Surgeon who complained about our anti-police bias in *overland* 161, the S11 issue (see his letter in the Miscellany section).

Funnily enough we received no submissions of the kind that Birrell might have found appropriate. Perhaps this is because *overland* readers and contributors are politically inclined to abhor the violence that the state perpetrates against protesters and to mistrust the way in which the capitalist media is happy to tell lies about those protesters. We only have to recall news reports on television where the voiceover condemning protester violence is in stark contradiction to the footage showing them being assulted, kicked and/or bashed by police.

Perhaps Birrell thinks our role should have been to find some pro-police voices to provide 'balance' to the issue. Maybe we could have asked Neil Mitchell, Jon Faine and Andrew Bolt for their opinions. Though they were probably too busy splashing them around the corporate and mainstream media to bother with a magazine whose masthead, after all, encourages the notion of political and cultural bias.

Some of the mail we get, we feel neither pleased about nor humoured by. While we don't, as a rule, get too emotional one way or the other about mail from the Federal Government, we recently received a letter from Philip Ruddock, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, which offended me about as much as anything I've received as editor of *overland*.

The man who has expanded the notion of moral vacuity to new extremes of emptiness, sent me a form letter which begins by urging me: "DON'T GIVE A JOB TO AN ILLEGAL WORKER". It's not so much

new world borders

the instruction – the Government does have to implement its laws and policies. It's more the stupid and uncritical arrogance that the letter employs and celebrates – from its bold exhortation through its mindless bureaucratic logic through to its flourished and photocopied signature. The letter's arrogance inspired me to follow up with a telephone enquiry to the Minister's Department. I asked for an information kit which they 'gladly supplied': a glossy overproduced folder of obscene rationalisations. It boggles the mind how much money the Government is prepared to spend to demonstrate its blithe cruelty.

As I write, the Government is doing its best to ensure a group of middle-east refugees/undocumented workers/asylum seekers remains stranded in the Indian Ocean. It is prepared to risk the wellbeing, if not lives, of 438 people to set an example which it knows would never be heeded. Yet the Labor Party is no better. The best Kim Beazley can do is pipe up in support of the Government 'in this instance'.

For a bunch of people who often claim to be dealing in the world of *realpolitik*, there is a utopian forgetting of history – past, present and future – in the words and deeds of most Australian politicians. Australia was founded by 'illegal immigrants' and people deemed 'illegal' will continue to arrive. Migration has never been fully prevented by the sometimes shoddily invented borders of the nation-state. And it is never likely to be. A quick look beyond the horizon of the next federal election reveals a world in which global migration patterns are vastly altered in the wake of massive economic shifts.

But there are more radical and fundamental challenges to the mindset of our politicians. By what right do they set Australian borders? In what spheres do they indeed set the borders? And why do they abdicate this role in others, such as in relation to the international flow of capital? These are difficult questions; any attempt to answer them requires the negotiation of contradictions. For example, arguments for the right of non-Aboriginal Australians to prevent anybody's entry to this country would logically extend to arguments for the sovereignty of Aboriginal people. Counter-arguments that we shouldn't be stuck in the past imply that nor should we be stuck in the present. Ultimately, the only argument Ruddock and company can mount successfully is that of possession – a possession founded on violence and maintained by oppression and exclusion.

THIS ISSUE OF *OVERLAND* contains a section entitled *New World Borders*, which examines many of the questions to come out of the Government's treatment of people who come to Australia 'illegally'. Edited by Angela Mitropoulos, the section is a radical take on the issues involved, containing views that are rarely articulated in the corporate media. While there are disagreements between the contributors on a number of issues, there is a commonality insofar as each takes aim at the destructive effect of borders (physical, cultural and psychological) on human beings and their interaction with other human beings, their communities and the wider world.

We are particularly pleased to be able to publish in the section writings by a number of asylum seekers either still in a detention centre or with recent experience of living in one.

THIS ISSUE INCLUDES the third *overland* lecture, by Amanda Lohrey. Entitled, 'The Project of the Self under Late Capitalism' it represents a departure from the previous two in that the second half of the 'lecture' is a work of fiction. In this 'offering' Lohrey argues that important 'structures of feeling' are emerging in contemporary Australia, especially in discourses and practices of 'the body', 'the self' and the acceptance of ideas and philosophies emanating from Asia. She makes the further point (vital for a magazine that sees itself as 'literary') that sometimes literature, particularly narrative fiction, is the best means of encountering, engaging and digesting the emergence of new movements, ideas and politics.

Ian Syson

Amanda Lohrey

Third *overland* Lecture

The Project of the Self under Late Capitalism

I DON'T PROPOSE giving an orthodox lecture here because I'm not a pundit but a fiction writer, someone who interprets and comments on the world through narrative, and this 'lecture' concludes with an excerpt from some recent work. That work reflects some interesting developments in contemporary Australia that are to do, I think, with new and emergent sensibilities, or what Raymond Williams might have referred to as new and emergent structures of feeling.[1] Just recently when sorting out my books prior to a move I came across a very old copy of Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man under Socialism* and in an ironic salute to this sublime if occasionally wrong-headed meditation on the utopian impulse that characterises human nature, I'm going to call this offering – this lecture that isn't – 'The Project of the Self under Late Capitalism'. Needless to say, my use of that phrase 'Late Capitalism' is ironic – how much later can it get? Interestingly, in recent times the use of the phrase has fallen away and for the first time in my memory, the Left and the Right have a term they can agree on: Globalisation. I can't help thinking that this is an irony in itself, and that there are further ironies to come.

What are these new and emergent structures of feeling? This was something that first engaged me when I went to live in Sydney in 1987. Before long I found myself involved through personal connections with a group of young men and women who were studying to be Zen Shiatsu practitioners and who were to form the basis of my novel, *Camille's Bread*. Most of them had unexceptional suburban upbringings and orthodox tertiary training but I was struck by certain crucial differences between their generation and mine. The Cold War politics and European dreaming that had formed my generation meant almost nothing to them. In other words, they had never been held in thrall to any of the old nineteenth century models of utopia.[2] Mostly between twenty-five and thirty-five, they had grown up in an Australia that increasingly was the site of a confluence of cultures but more than anything they looked to the East for inspiration. This was a connection that might begin with something as straightforward as a martial arts class and burgeon from there into a profound engagement with alternative models of knowledge and wisdom, not infrequently leading to wholesale conversion. Whatever the degree of engagement, and it might be something as relatively trivial as taking a class in *ikebana* or preparing *sushi*, it seemed to me that this was the first generation of Australians to absorb Asian influences osmotically and that in certain areas, like the inner city, a new sensibility was developing that was a portent of how Australians generally might see the world ten or even twenty years from now. As for my Shiatsu practitioners, they differed from the mainstream only in degree not kind. In essence they were

fierce materialists who, through a rigorous regimen of diet and physical training, aspired to re-invent themselves by reconditioning their material base, the body – if necessary, cell by cell. They aspired to a kind of utopia of the body, and what could be more Australian than that? They were Zen surfers without the waves.

I don't want to make too much of this. Clearly there are major differences between members of the same generation growing up within the one city, not to mention differences between the city and the country. But nor should the changes in sensibility that have occurred in the past two decades be underestimated. When I showed the manuscript of *Camille's Bread* to people within the publishing industry, many of them regarded the material as freakish and bizarre. "This is like a fable," one senior editor said, "all these people obsessed with their bodies, nobody lives like this." In fact, living in the literary ghetto, they were the ones out of touch and in the five years since the book was published I've lost count of the number of people, perfect strangers, who've said to me at readings or in letters (the equivalent of): "This book is about my son/daughter/brother/husband/boyfriend . . ."

Since then I've kept a watching brief on the evolution of the idea of the self as a constant work-in-progress and the concomitant growth of what might be described as privatised utopias; the utopia of one. Generally speaking there are two tiers to this: first the body and then, if you'll forgive the Cartesian shorthand, the mind. Like everything else in the amazingly and endlessly stimulating world of the everyday, both are a site of contradiction. For one thing, the minute an individual seeks to carve out a realm of personal freedom, consumer capitalism moves to appropriate and degrade it. Privatised utopias can be a retreat from consumer capitalism but they are also vulnerable to its depredations. The capitalist economy is almost always in favour of the privatised, and one of the axioms of its advertising is that there is nothing to stop you re-inventing yourself. You are an increasingly mobile and privatised unit of labour, cut loose from traditional forms of collective identity and responsibility. Decades ago, Raymond Williams used the phrase, "mobile privatisation" to refer to the breakdown of extended communities, regional loyalties and stable work places (and to these we can add the degradation of Nature). All of these developments give rise to privatised forms of the ideal. When all else is free-floating, unstable, in a process of being dismantled or alienated from you, what is it that you have left? And the answer is: the body. The body itself becomes a utopian site. And the project of the utopian body is primarily about the pragmatics of health, fitness and diets. Beauty and longevity are no longer givens: they can be aspired to. (Obviously the more affluent you are the more scope you have.) When I was growing up, anyone on a special diet was a crank and the first of the new-wave vegetarian restaurants in London in the seventies called itself exactly that, 'Cranks'. Now almost everybody is on some kind of diet, or has been, or is contemplating it, and diets as a path to health and personal development have entered the mainstream at all levels and in myriad forms.

> In the past fifteen years the Green movement has passed from being the public domain of cranks (in dreadlocks and sandals, chained to trees) into the mainstream: witness, Greens in Suits, Suits for Forests, Green Liberals . . .

In addition to the explosion of new discourses and practices around food and nutrition, we've seen the development of a militant fitness ethic. First jogging was big and then came aerobics, yoga, gyms, weights and running machines. I remember once in the eighties in Sydney researching background for a short story I wanted to write about an obsessive jogger (subsequently published in Jenna Mead's collection, *Bodyjamming*) and I went to a big, fashionable gym in Surry Hills in Sydney and pretended to be interested in setting up a personal training program. An amiable young guy in chic sweats took me aside for a consultation. With hands on hips and a very earnest expression he put his first question, "So what are you after, Amanda? Do you want *strength*, or do you want *definition*?" I didn't answer him. I'm still wondering.

It seems to me that all this can be read as a form of Individualism that has both positive and negative potential – positive as a realm of freedom, negative

as an alienating sphere of separation that can be justly interrogated by the question: 'Fitter and healthier for what?' In the majority of cases, the discourses that surround the promotion of the pursuit of fitness purport to be instrumental and practical, to be about health and greater productivity, as a worker and a consumer, but there is also, and often, an aesthetic ideal – one that makes you not only more acceptable to the opposite sex but also to yourself. But beyond even that, and this is the thing that interests me most, there is an attraction to the idea of perfection and the pursuit of it for its own sake. The notion of 'personal best' can be read literally but it can, I suggest, also be read poetically. We want to be fit so we can work harder and more efficiently, but we also seek a kind of transcendence of the mundane. We want to get into 'the zone', to a place where industrial discipline, for one thing, can't reach us – or anything else either, such as the fraught demands of family and relationships. When you talk to people who pursue any of these activities with rigour this is what they talk about: 'the zone'. How to get there; how it feels like nothing else ("better than sex" as one long-time amateur marathon runner described it to me) and how in the zone they feel most 'themselves'.

It's true that there are interesting anthropological questions here to do with notions of 'purity and danger', to borrow from the title of Mary Douglas's seminal work, and it's no coincidence that these syndromes – this pursuit of the clean body – are coterminous with the highest rates of environmental pollution on the planet, ever. But something else is going on as well. On the one hand there is the desire to come to terms with a dangerous environment by exercising compensatory control of the body (sometimes in perverse and extreme forms, as in some models of anorexia) but the project of the self is not just about the renovation of the body, it's also about the reconditioning of the mind, and very often this takes the form of a desire, a drive even, to access universes of meaning other than the Rational – which brings me to the so-called consciousness movement.

The second tier of this new Individualism – the first being the renovation of the body and regimes of health and fitness – is what used to be called mental health, mental wellbeing and even, to recuperate a couple of very old-fashioned phrases, the pursuit of happiness and peace of mind. These refer to an old preoccupation that continues to take new forms, and the so-called consciousness movement is one of them. On a popular level it accommodates a whole range of models of meaning 'alternative' to Western Rationalism, from Theosophy to Scientology to Transcendental Meditation – the list is long. Some aspects are more respectable then others; Buddhist philosophy for example is now taught by Tibetan monks and scholars in philosophy departments in more than one Australian university. Cognitive science and the philosophy of consciousness are areas of explosive growth at the international academic level where there has been a rapid proliferation in the number of journals in consciousness studies and scholarly conferences on the so-called 'hard question'. Neither science nor philosophy, however, has been able to make even the smallest inroads in research into explaining the phenomenon of consciousness. After all these years we still don't even know why we dream, and orthodox psychology continues to demonstrate its bankruptcy in the general arena of the pursuit of happiness.

A significant proportion of intellectuals on both the Left and the Right have traditionally been inclined to sneer at anything to do with the so-called New Age, in either its individualist or (mostly) failed communitarian forms, and to proscribe it as narcissistic or utopian. Christopher Hitchens wrote his scarifying but somewhat one-sided critique in the eighties, *The Culture of Narcissism* and various Marxists have deplored the realm of "the pursuit of a purely individual, a mere psychological, project of salvation", to borrow a phrase from the US Marxist, Fredric Jameson. Much of this critique is limited in the forms of knowledge it calls upon, often reflecting an unapologetic ignorance of work done in the area of psychoanalysis, most notably by the British school of object relations (Donald Winnicott in particular), although some critics on the Left, like the art critic Peter Fuller, offer a very productive engagement with psychotherapeutic models of the self. These are issues I haven't time or space to go into here, except to say we would do better to see that project of the self which is obsessed with developing a six pack in the gym as being less of an exercise in mindless narcissism and more about the individual's attempts to find a sphere of freedom and agency (a mini 'cosmos of hope' as Fuller might have said) in response to experiences of powerlessness and worthlessness under regimes of economic rationalism. At the very least it beats shooting up. Meanwhile the entrepreneurial Right is often less resistant to the consciousness move-

ment *in practice* – and I'm not referring here to irrelevant paper tigers like P.P. McGuinness – because capitalism will appropriate anything it can turn to instrumental use. Hence, for example, the adaptation of certain forms of New Age mysticism into modified forms of stress management that will enable executives to work more effectively in the interests of the corporation. But more of this later.

Within the consciousness movement there is one significant collective movement, however, in which the private realms of the self and the individual body are linked to a wider social movement which is about our relationship with Capitalist technology's Other, i.e. Nature. The most significant utopian discourse to come to the fore under late capitalism is that of environmentalism, now more commonly referred to as the Green Movement, a movement based on the principle of Gaia, of a unified field of consciousness that pervades all of Nature, including the human. In the past fifteen years the Green movement has passed from being the public domain of cranks (in dreadlocks and sandals, chained to trees) into the mainstream: witness, Greens in Suits, Suits for Forests, Green Liberals and so on. The phenomenon of Nature re-asserting itself against culture marches on apace, and is worth a lecture in itself. It grows alongside and has affinities with another rapidly growing movement in Western cultures that defines and constructs the self in a particular relationship to Nature antipathetic to global capital, and is the fastest growing religious philosophy in the West, i.e. Buddhism. The latent and not-so-latent pantheism of the Green movement clearly has strong affinities with Buddhism and it's not uncommon to go to meetings of the Tibet-Australia association and see ageing veterans of the anti-Vietnam movement, some of whom will tell you, only half-jokingly, that in terms of current world problematics you can argue that, on a smaller scale, Tibet is the Vietnam of the moment and the Dalai Lama its spiritual Ho Chi Minh. The so-called Third World talks back in unexpected ways, and Buddhism is arguably the most influential of current postcolonial discourses in the West – postcolonialism with a twist. Meanwhile new technologies of the self related to or adjacent to Buddhism are making inroads into the mainstream. Vipassana meditation, for example, is now being trialled in a major prison in New South Wales after success in North America. Substantial numbers of high level executives endorse the TM movement and its methods and recent studies in Australia show Vietnam Vets dealing successfully with trauma through yoga and meditation. None of this is wacky anymore, although a prominent figure in the science community that I interviewed in the early nineties asked me not to reveal that he was a Buddhist or long-term meditator as it could damage his credibility with his colleagues. This led me to wonder if the breadth of these emergent structures of feeling might not be obscured because of certain embarrassments that attach to being perceived among one's cohort or peer group as adhering to the 'irrational'. Robert Dessaix remarked to me once that an important cultural question at any given moment is: what is it that most *embarrasses* us?

A significant proportion of intellectuals on both the Left and the Right have traditionally been inclined to sneer at anything to do with the so-called New Age, in either its individualist or (mostly) failed communitarian forms, and to proscribe it as narcissistic or utopian.

All of this is a broad, rambling preamble – one that does scant justice to any of its elements – to the fiction below. It's an excerpt from a novel-in-progress and it concerns a middle level executive in the IT industry, a former analyst programmer and now project manager called Richard Kline, known to his intimates as Rick. Rick is undergoing what might be described as a mid-life crisis; is becoming increasingly angry and ill at ease in his life, despite being a devoted father and one half of what is basically an okay marriage. Unfocused anger and rising stress levels culminate in an incident of road rage where he strikes another motorist, a younger and fitter man, and gets beaten up for his trouble. That night, and in the scene that precedes the one following, his wife, Zoe, delivers an ultimatum: he has become unbearable to live with and unless he does something about himself she'll leave him.

IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED he felt as if he were waiting.

Waiting for what?

And Zoe, too, was waiting.

And then one of the programmers with the company, a man called Carl Kremmer, hanged himself in the basement of the North Sydney offices. The cleaners came in on a Monday morning and found him hanging from an air-conditioning pipe. The irony of this was not lost on Rick. A man had contrived to cut off the flow of air through his body by tying himself with nylon cord to a valve that was there to enable him to breathe more wholesomely, more comfortably, without the extremes of heat or cold, without noise or smog or wind or dust, without frost or mist or airborne pollen.

By the end of the month, the office of Human Resources Management had circularised a memo offering free programs in stress management – a reward, as Zoe had remarked, tartly, for working late into the night and falling asleep at your workstation.

ONE OF THESE PROGRAMS was a short course in meditation. The memo came accompanied by a glossy brochure extolling "an age old technology of the self" and promising a technique that would "eliminate stress" and enable you to "maximise your potential".

Why not? he thought. I've tried everything else, and this at least would placate Zoe; would look as if he were making some kind of effort.

WHEN THE FORMS came back, only two from his team had elected to go. The other was Mark Paradisis. Mark was a young analyst programmer, twenty-eight years old and cocksure, a real Mr Cool whose short, reddish brown hair was shaved with a number one blade, and who ran to a series of stylish, over-sized jackets, collarless shirts and occasional waistcoats in bold but stylish patterns that complemented his dark looks. Bumptious and clever, in that narrow-banded way that tech-heads had, he treated Rick with a deference that was part mock, part real and would circle around him like a teasing child, absurdly deferential one minute, taking stinging liberties the next.

One evening he informed Rick that currently he, Mark, was "between cars" and since they'd be going straight from work to meditation classes – "oops, sorry, stress management" (winking at him) he thought perhaps Rick could give him a lift, at least to the introductory lecture on the Monday evening. Beyond that, he couldn't, y' know, guarantee that he'd front. "They might be a bunch of crazies, K, know what I mean? Hippies, cult-struck mind-benders. Whatever."

WHEN THE TIME CAME, Rick was glad of the younger man's company. As part of a twosome, he felt less self-conscious. It seemed like more of a game.

The classes began at seven and they drove straight from work, journeying across town in the lea of peak-hour traffic and making a pit-stop near Taylor Square for souvlaki which they ate parked in the car. It was hot and dusty, and as they sat looking out the window at the squalor of the Square – its rough street trade, its sinister little patch of grassy parkland between the traffic lights, its pungent smells of burnt coffee, rancid frying oil and carbon monoxide – the absurdity of their dinner setting, only minutes away from the meditation centre, made Rick feel perversely cheerful, and he chortled out loud, almost choking on the first bite of dry pide bread.

Mark turned his head, sharply. "What?" he asked.

Rick could only shake his head, still struggling to swallow.

"Nothing," he coughed, "nothing at all."

Mark then began, in between bouts of wolfing down the kibbeh special, to launch into a disarmingly ingenuous rundown on the mechanics of his mental wellbeing – which would have been funny, if it hadn't had a certain quality of robotic desperation.

It was like this, he explained: he was not moving forward, he was not making progress in his life. He'd had a few knocks in the last couple of years: been dumped by his girlfriend, got pissed a lot, lost his licence, lost the plot you might say. Then this came up and, well, as he saw it, it was like servicing or reconditioning your car. Things wear down after a while, the engine's not ticking over, there are some clunks in performance – you go to a good mechanic and you get it seen to. So you can move forward, so you can progress. As he saw it, the car you've got may not be much good but it's the only one you've

got. You've got to tune it up from time to time, otherwise the wheels fall off. You don't move forward, you don't progress.

By this time they had finished their hasty supper and pulled out into Oxford Street. "How do you know when you've progressed?" Rick asked, teasingly. He noticed how nervy Mark was, how he couldn't sit still and jiggled one knee up and down like it was on voltage. Hot wired.

"You look at it this way," Mark said. "You check for reality statements. You ask yourself: where am I now compared to where I was? You get feedback from people you work for. They'll tell you: now you score – I don't know – say, eight out of ten, whereas once it was three, four, something like that."

He remembers thinking: here is Mark, talking as if he were a machine, a machine within a machine; a bright red Honda SL encased in my old silver Fiat. And then Mark said something poetic: "Y'know, K, I'm annoyed at having my future dictated by my footprints in the sand – places I've been, what I've done in the past, all that."

"You read that in a book somewhere?"

Mark shrugged, glanced away. "Yeah, probably."

At that moment they turned into Underwood Street.

THE HOUSE THEY WERE looking for was an elegant old terrace, painted in lavender and white. It stood on the brow of the hill looking down to the sweep of the bay and had a big peach coloured hibiscus bush in bloom by the front door. He remembers it now as one of those stifling summer evenings, the gardens petrified in a humid stillness; remembers how he and Mark paused at the iron gate, struck by the shadowy beauty of the street; the exquisite tracery of the trees in outline against the darkening sky and the rich, orderly beauty of the terraces, unfolding down the hill with the satisfying symmetry of a series of perfect numbers.

The door was ajar so they went in and through to the front salon, a room of elegant proportions fitted out like a corporate office: pale grey carpet, eight rows of pale green chairs and a whiteboard positioned in front of a marble fireplace. On the chairs were twenty or so men and women who looked like Mark, mostly in their late twenties or early thirties, stressed-out yuppies in casual but expensive clothes. Instinctively he cast an appraising glance at the women in the room; noted Mark doing the same. Primal instinct.

They sat, and looked ahead without speaking, as if they had exhausted their chitchat in the car. Before long a man in his early forties, dressed in a suit, entered the room from the rear and stood by the whiteboard. Smiling at them, he introduced himself as Jack.

Jack was to be their trainer.

Rick liked Jack on sight. In his light grey suit, pale blue shirt and yellow tie he presented in every way as a middle level executive. His skin shone with a tanned glow and this, combined with his balding head and round face gave him the appearance of a corporate buddha. Jack had a way of talking with an almost permanent smile on his lips, as if sharing a joke, but his eyes shone with a warm, dark gloss, insinuating that yes, the unfathomable *could* be fathomed.

He began by telling them that meditation was a simple, undemanding process through which the mind effortlessly arrived at the source of consciousness. *The source of consciousness?* Immediately Rick's fickle mind began to play with this, punning on the idea of source – he couldn't get out of his head an image of sauce on the brain: a large brain on a plate with a lurid red sauce poured over it, and then a white sauce, and next a yellow, like thick custard . . . without this sauce the brain looked remarkably naked, uninteresting even . . . doughy and grey, like batter left overnight in the fridge that has begun to oxidise . . . could this be the *organ superieur*, the *summa cum laude*, the source of all that was bright, and beautiful, and inspired?

Look how his mind had wandered already! He recollected himself.

Jack was talking about peak performance. "During meditation the body enters into deep levels of relaxation and rest, a more profound rest than that experienced even in deep sleep. During that time the body becomes attuned to the subtle vibrations of nature which repair the body and release the creative energies of the human organism . . ."

Next to him, Mark had fallen asleep, which was not surprising, given that the words had a high degree of abstraction, an airy quality, and that Mark often didn't leave his workstation until after ten at night. And Jack had a soft, soothing voice which exuded warmth. The effect was soporific. He was, Rick could see, a very contained man, though with a surprising tendency to a soft, silent giggling. Nevertheless there was something attractive in his persona that was hard to define, something subtle.

Rick looked around him. Not everyone, it was

clear, had a mind as restless as his. Everyone else was looking attentive and serious. Most of them were younger than he, and as junior executives they were used to paying attention; used to listening for the 'grab'; the slogan, the key phrases, the code words, the open sesame.

And now they were here for the *mantra*. As Mark would say: "If it works, it's cool."

IN JACK'S DISCOURSE there seemed, he thought, to be a lot of emphasis on the brain. What about the heart?

As if reading his mind Jack moved on to the subject of 'perfect health' – didn't these people ever use qualifiers? – and heart disease, and how medical research had shown conclusively that meditation regularises blood pressure and lowers cholesterol and stress levels. Indeed, in orthodox terms, this was the area of its greatest success.

Beside him now, Mark had begun, gently, to snore.

Jack's soft, sonorous tones were such that perhaps they didn't need to learn to meditate; perhaps all they needed was a tape of Jack's voice with one of those piping flutes in the background and the sound of running water. On the way over Mark had told him about the time he worked for a hot new IT company in Palo Alto in California where, during a particularly tense and difficult project, one of the supervisors had had a notion to play a relaxation tape as background in the office until all the programmers had shrieked that it was getting on their nerves. Tonight, however, The Voice was working for Mark, who had dozed through almost the entire talk; eyes closed, head slumped forward on his chest.

JACK CONCLUDED HIS TALK by asking each one of them to say why they had come. And they all said something sensible. They wanted 'better concentration'; they wanted 'to achieve more', to do twice their current workload. They wanted to feel less tense, less tired, less impatient, more calm. No-one said they wanted to maximise their potential. No-one admitted to being fed-up and angry. And no-one talked about: "the mysterious absences at the heart of even the fullest lives" – to quote from a book review Rick had idled through in the dentist's surgery only yesterday.

Mark woke up in time to say that he regarded his body as a prime racing machine, and just lately he realised it needed a bit of a tune-up. Rick said he wanted to get more done with less fatigue. What else was he going to say? That he was angry? and that as he grew older he was getting angrier? angry at the universe for failing him? Listening attentively to the reasons the others gave for being there that night, he wondered if they too were dissembling; camouflaging some inner vision of flames – some moment of madness, some visceral ache of yearning – with the managerial workspeak of the brochure, a language they knew how to put on like a suit of armour; like battle fatigues.

THE INTRODUCTORY TALK finished early, around nine-thirty, and he hadn't far to drive his companion who asked to be dropped off at a club in Oxford Street. Refreshed by his nap at the meditation centre, Mark was ready to party on. On the way up the hill Rick teased him about falling asleep and with the disarming ingenuousness of a child, Mark asked for a 'recap' on what he had missed.

"Fill me in, K," he said. "What was the gist of it?"

"Some things are too subtle to be rendered into paraphrase."

Mark threw back his head. "Seriously?" And then: "Yeah, yeah, I'll bet."

God, he was a boy, a slick, smart-arsed boy.

"You'd better stay awake tomorrow night."

"Yeah, definitely, if you say so, K," winking at him as he lurched out of the car at the intersection and sauntered off up into the neon-lit street.

DRIVING HOME Rick was disconcerted by the fact that even if there had been time, he couldn't have told Mark much of what Jack had said. Was his concentration as shot as all that? Or had it all been too vague, too abstract? He would have to say the evening had been something of an anti-climax: he had expected revelations but none came. Perhaps the first night was a test, and if you persevered and kept coming back, in the end you'd get a pay-off; the magic word, the open sesame.

AND YOU DID. Get the magic word, that is. On the second night Jack told them about the *mantra*. The *mantra* was a special sound. It was like a key in the lock of their inner being, and the insistent chant of it would open them up and put them in touch with . . .

With what? On this they still weren't clear. Everything Jack said sounded reassuring at the time, but evaporated in your ears within seconds.

FOR THE NEXT two nights the talks continued as before. And each evening Mark sat dozing in his chair beside him, so that Rick had to 'recap' for him on the way home before dropping him off at a club: *Zero* in Oxford Street, *Moscow* in Surry Hills, *Yadda Yadda* in Leichhardt. Clubs seemed to have a life of twelve months; Rick hadn't heard of any of them. It made him feel old. "I don't know any of these places," he said to Mark.

Mark shook his head in mock commiseration. "This is what happens when you get married, K."

HE FOUND IT extraordinarily difficult to summarise what Jack said about anything – like the words were little nodules of polystyrene filler, the sort that come in vast crates as packing around whitegoods and spill out of the box when you attempt to extricate the new VCR. You could gag on them. On another night he would find the words rolling around in his mouth like ball bearings; precise, elegant and full of weighty momentum, but cold, smooth and hard to trap.

One night, clearly bored with Rick's struggle to condense 'the message', Mark interrupted his waffling to say: "Y'know, K, I was really surprised when I saw you had put your name down for this course. You impress me as the strong type. You know," his mouth curled into a mock grimace: "Stress? What stress?"

"I *am* the strong type," he said. He was not about to enter into emotional correspondence with a younger man.

And anyway, it was far too difficult to explain, especially to someone like Mark, that lurking somewhere in his consciousness, like a virus in the bloodstream, was some sliver of pain he could neither disgorge, nor salve. He could think of some parodic scenario that might make sense to Mark; a virus, say, infecting his program, or that movie, *The Invisible Man,* where something was making its way through the pathways of the body, like a microchip afloat in a vast cyclotron.

Was it in the shadowy background of his consciousness, or at the forefront of his *un*conscious? – whatever *that* was. When he thought of it at all, he tended to think of the unconscious as a level playing field where small, neurotic athletes jostled for the front row – and learning to meditate might enable him to marshall them into some kind of team where all the elements could combine well, could get onto cosy terms, could resolve whatever it was that was creating friction between them. The *mantra* would be the oil in the grease and oil change, some soothing balm that would ease them into their right formation, and he would become a cyber program without glitches; debugged.

The perfect dream of neuroscience.

At last he would be rid of that unresolved yearning that had haunted him all his life; that was so unsettling, like a metaphysical pinprick in every balloon of pleasure; in every activity, actual or potential, virtual or real.

ON THE FOURTH NIGHT they got it. It, the *mantra*. The payoff, the special word, the magical formula.

As usual he and Mark went straight from the office and they were late, and hungry. Mark wanted to stop near Taylor Square and get a falafel.

"We haven't time," he said.

"I'm starving." Like many of his team, he knew Mark would have skipped lunch, or shot out for a Mars Bar from the machine in the corridor. The way they worked was crazy. In the glove-box, he told Mark, there was a bag of roasted almonds his very practical wife kept there for times like this, or when his son, Luke, was hungry. And had he, Mark, remembered to bring the ritual offering? He half expected his young colleague to forget this: the flowers and the fruit. And was touched to find that he hadn't forgotten, that he had them in a white plastic takeout food container in his designer back-pack.

WHEN THEY ARRIVED, there was an air of quiet expectation. Everyone was sitting on the green meeting-room chairs with their small parcels of flowers and fruit on their knees. Some had bought a large expensive bunch, wrapped in sharp peaks of cellophane and tied with twirling boutique ribbon. Others appeared to have garnered random blossoms from the garden, or purchased something cheap and already wilting about the edges from the fruit stall at the station kiosk.

Rick was first to be initiated.

In a small room at the top of the stairs Jack was waiting, seated in a stylish cane armchair. Against the wall facing the door was a table that looked like some kind of simple altar with a gold silk cloth and a

single candle. Jack was dressed, as ever, in his corporate suit, and welcomed Rick with his usual glowing smile. Awkwardly, and with both hands, Rick held out the small bouquet of mixed flowers, the apple and banana and the white cotton handkerchief. The ritual gifts, the token of respect. But respect for whom and what?

The gifts were accepted and placed casually on the altar. "This is a very simple procedure," Jack began, "and it won't take long. I'm going to say a prayer in Sanskrit in praise of all gurus, or spiritual teachers, and then I will give you your *mantra*.

Spiritual teachers? What spiritual teachers? Could Jack be classified as a spiritual teacher? Surely not? All through the course Rick had resolutely turned his face away from the more esoteric character of Jack's discourse, something hazy that seemed to hover on the fringes of his perception. He knew the technique was an adaptation of a practice derived from eastern mysticism, with the same origins as, say, a suburban yoga class, and beyond that he did not wish to venture. It wasn't necessary, as Jack himself had intimated from the outset. But now the presence of the altar, however minimalist, made him feel uncomfortable.

It was a low-key ceremony, simple and precise. The *mantra* was no recognisable word, just a high pitched sound, an exhalation of air with the tongue against the bottom teeth. Jack said it, and then he asked Rick to say it. After Rick had repeated it a few times, Jack said, "Good", and then cautioned him not to repeat it to anyone else, as this would diminish its potency.

Rick nodded but his neck felt stiff. He was not used to being in a room with an altar. He hadn't expected to be inducted into anything spiritual: he thought it was about getting a technique that was scientifically based.

As if reading his mind, Jack said: "Remember, this is not a religion, you are not being asked to adopt any set of dogmas. Just meditate on your *mantra* each day, morning and evening, and come back in a week for a checking."

And that was it. Something of an anti-climax, really. At the back of his mind was the thought that some people, not under corporate sponsorship, were paying hundreds of dollars for this. Could anything that expensive be this simple? Could anything worth having be that simple? Could peace of mind be so simple?

MARK WAS SECOND last to go in. Outside, Rick waited for him on the verandah, looking out over the dusky roofline of the hill, the purple night sky over Port Jackson Bay.

Eventually Mark emerged, exhaling heavily in a bemused sigh. "I need a ciggy," he said, "do you mind waiting?"

Like furtive children they moved into the side lane and Mark lit up. He looked around him, up and down the lane, down at his feet, and then up and down the lane again. He seemed edgy.

"So that's it, K," he said.

"Apparently."

"The secret word."

"Yep."

"Is yours one syllable or two?"

"One."

Mark seemed reassured by this, as his was two, which meant at the very least that they were not all getting the same *mantra*. The idea of this was an affront to them both, a possible sign that they were being suckered, not succoured. Though they both worked as willing corporate slaves, the idea that the individual was special and had singular needs was at the heart of their personal belief system.

"Are you seriously going to do this every morning and every night?" Mark asked.

"I'm going to try. I'll give it three months."

Something told him Mark wouldn't last three days. He seemed unhappy with the outcome; his cocksureness had fallen away and he was peculiarly sombre, like some black cloud had passed across his screen and all the wise-cracking had been erased. Was as restless, as jittery, as ever but not in his teasing, good-natured way; more irritable, hostile even, curiously offhand. "I'm starving," he said, with a sharp intake of breath, and tossed the glowing butt of his cigarette into the bouganvillea that ran like flame along the side wall. And then, brusquely: "Do you have to go home? Why don't we go somewhere and eat?"

Rick thought for a minute, and said: "Why don't you come back to my place?" He had been thinking of bringing Mark home for a while. Zoe would find him amusing.

Mark hesitated, and then with a kind of shy, haunted look, said, "No, no, thanks anyway. I'll grab a bite on the way home." There was something in the way he said it, something in his aura that was worrying. For Rick the little ceremony had been of

scarcely any moment – bland, even – but Mark seemed unnerved. Rick felt protective towards him. "Let's go to Miro's," he said, mentioning a bistro only a few streets from where he lived. Mark could get a taxi on from there.

AT MIRO'S THEY SAT on a quilted leather banquette in a dim red light and Mark downed two quick schooners of Guinness. As he drank, he became more and more morose, straying ruefully into a reverie of his childhood dreams. "Y'now, K, all I ever wanted to do was play Rugby League," he said, crouched over the lip of his glass. "Not because I wanted to be rich and famous, not that . . ." and his voice trailed off, and he brooded for a minute. "Even now, sometimes when I'm watching a game on TV, I get so emotional I could cry. There's something pure about it, you know what I'm saying? Honest. No bullshit. The speed, the strength, the raw courage . . . the sight of one man hurtling through the pack like –" He stopped, lips pursed together, as if stymied by the inadequacy of mere words, " – like a human fucking projectile. All heart, nothing's going to stop him, you can see the veins bulging in his neck, you can see the look he's got in his eyes, and it's a look of . . . of . . .", he shook his head. ". . . pure momentum – like an arrow –" and here he raised his right arm in a gliding motion across his face "– straight . . . straight . . ." And he shook his head again, and gazed out into space, unable to finish the sentence. "And I cry, I cry just watching it. I admit it." And again, he crouched over the lip of his glass. "And that's all I ever wanted to do. Ever." He said it again, loudly and with drunken emphasis. "*Ever!*" And banged the parquet table that reeked of smoke and beer.

BY THE END OF THE night they were both drunk, slouching out of the bar with all the elan of two deflated tires. He dropped Mark at a cab rank two blocks down the road and hoped that he, Rick, would make the two kilometres home without being breathalysed.

Zoe, thank God, was a heavy sleeper. Stumbling into the bathroom for a pee, his head in a purple brown fug of Guinness, not to mention the Vodka chasers, he stubbed his toe on a broken tile and began to bleed, a thin rivulet of red dripping onto the white tiles. He swore, fumbled in the cabinet for a band-aid and sank heavily onto the lavatory seat to bind his toe. For such a small injury, the pain was acute. Softly, he swore again. So much, he told himself, for meditation.

That night he dreamed that a currawong was pecking out his eyes. Strangely, there was no pain. Around 5.00 a.m, he woke in the dark, with the *mantra* spinning in his head.

AFTER THE FIRST WEEK he asked Mark how it was going. Mark hesitated. "Uh . . . on and off, K, on and off."

"More off than on?"

"Uh, not exactly. I just don't do it at the usual times. You know, morning and evening."

Rick didn't pursue it. For one thing he was having his own difficulties. To his surprise he found he couldn't sit still for five minutes, never mind twenty. At his workstation he could sit for what seemed like hours without moving a muscle, but without his beautiful backlit colour screen and his Boolean logic, his algebraic grammar, his magical formulae of conditionality – *if this, then this* –he was at the mercy of his chaotic and untidy brain, a jerky and primitive slide-show of trivia. Football fixtures for the coming week, what to buy for Luke's birthday, reminders to get the drier fixed, had he paid his car insurance? – all the endless trivia of daily life zoomed across the inner screen of his brain like balls careening across a billiard table. The minute he settled himself in the stiff-backed dining chair, his scalp would begin to itch, his collar chafe . . . he would spin the *mantra* into an imaginary space before his eyes like a bowler unleashing a ball but he could never, as it were, find his length: the *mantra* ball would fall to the earth with a thud and lumber along the turf, or fail to land at all and sail off disappearing into the clouds while his thoughts, those mad computer game figures, scuttled about the ballpark of his neural field in a noisy, short-circuiting clamour, like machine-gun fire ricocheting in a stadium.

Only a few months before he had felt himself at a point of near despair, all but lost to the black dog, and now here he was like an idiot child unable to master the first letters of the alphabet. After what seemed like half an hour, he would look at his watch and find that five minutes had passed or, on a good day, ten. Where was the timelessness, the loss of self that others spoke of? How come he never made it into the zone, not even for a second?

A WEEK LATER, at the first group checking on the Monday night, he had sat and listened to the experiences of others. Mark beside him. Mark had only managed to "try it", he said, on "two or three mornings" and couldn't understand why even to contemplate the doing of it seemed an enormous mental effort. It felt like homework, he said: the mere thought of it set up an internal resistance.

Rick had smiled and patted him on the shoulder, as if it were no big deal really, and all the while he was thinking: *You're not desperate enough.*

All through the first checking Mark had fidgeted in his chair as they were forced to listen to the brilliant experiences of the others. One man had seen white lights, another had drifted off into an orange haze, someone else had experienced an intense sensation in the middle of her forehead where the Third Eye lay. With each declaration Mark had looked sideways at Rick and rolled his eyes, as if to say: "What a bunch of tossers," or "There's always someone, someone who's had an *experience*." There's always the goody-goodies in the class, the point scorers who announce with transparently fake wonder and humility that they've hit the mark; can top whatever you've got to offer; are among the chosen. Always someone whose experiences are bigger and better than yours.

Jack sat quietly, simply acknowledging each individual response with his customary smiling detachment. When Rick at last spoke up it was as if he, Jack, had been waiting for what Rick had to say, as if (he felt) the responses of the others had been too good to be true, and what Rick had to say was real. While Rick laid out the banality of his efforts Jack nodded sympathetically. "Firstly," he had said, "scientific tests show you are always doing better, and going deeper than you think you are. Second, don't ever force it, just witness the thoughts that come up and then let them go, while gently bringing the sound of the *mantra* back into your head."

But nothing Jack said served to dispel Rick's scepticism. I'll give it three months, he thought. It seemed, then, like an eternity.

NOTES

1. In both *The Long Revolution* and later *Politics and Letters*, Williams struggles, with only limited success, to define this as the way in which "particular activities combine into a way of thinking and living", an "area of tension between ideology, or articulation, and primary experience". It refers he says not so much to the categories of class or society as that of generation and occupies "an area of interaction" between the official consciousness of an epoch, as codified in its doctrines and legislation, and the whole process of actually living its consequences. Despite this unsatisfying vagueness the concept spoke to a need in the new British cultural analysis of the 1960s and was taken up and used by a number of influential critics on the Left, John Berger and Peter Fuller among them. One of the reasons for its being preferred to 'sensibility', apart from its more inclusive conceptual bagginess, was no doubt that it was free of connotations of the genteel.
2. This was a period, I might say, when none of my students at the University of Technology, Sydney, all with high TER scores, had heard of the Cuban missile crisis and only one or two knew who Trotsky was.

I'd like to dedicate this offering to the memory of the Australian historian, Kay Daniels who died in July of this year. Kay was one of the earliest and, in subtle ways, the most influential of Australian feminist scholars in the second half of this century. Her publications include Uphill all the Way, So Much Hard Work, Convict Women *and the ground-breaking historiographical essay that introduces* Women in Australia: an annotated guide to the records. *This publication formed the basis of countless new research theses throughout Australia. In 1985 Kay left academic life to work in the government bureaucracy in Canberra, first in education where she was a strong influence in introducing more Australian content into tertiary studies across the board, and later in Communications and the Arts where she undertook groundbreaking work in the area of Intellectual Property and Copyright, Moral Rights, Indigenous Rights and Digital Rights as well as pioneering work on parallel imports, CDs and books. One of her best ideas was to commission a tax consultant to prepare a model for the then Keating Government that would come up with a more sympathetic and appropriate tax model for artists. This was rejected by Treasury and shortly after the Keating Fellowships were introduced which, as Kay argued, benefited only the few when a decent tax policy for artists would have benefited the many. It was characteristic of her intellectual method and her politics that she went always to the heart of things with a withering critique of the surface and the showy. During her years as a bureaucrat she continued to write history and at the time of her death was well into a radical social history of the first twenty-five years of Van Diemen's Land.*

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neoCorporate revolution

Samuel Latham

DAVID HAD DEVIATED from the script completely. Yet this experience gave him the understanding that improvisation was an art perfected by actors who work tirelessly at their craft. Apparently, this deviation, which could have been classified as a side-step or detour by an optimistic individual, was not accepted in the corporate world which occupied his Monday to Friday reality.

"David, I know you must be wondering why you are here," and this was exactly what he had been doing. However, he had framed the enquiry in the broader context of "Why am I *here*?" Not broad enough to politely delve into a philosophical line of enquiry, but embracing the subject of "*here* at work" as opposed to "here in the General Manager's Office". "So David, can you tell me why you are here? before you nod off?" Brian smiled.

"I'm sorry. I came because . . . " and he wanted to say, "because you requested it." Yet foresight suggested this type of response may get this meeting, which he was already nervous about, off to a bad start. He also did not want to volunteer any information that could be incriminating as the meeting could be completely innocent. "I really don't know Brian, to be honest."

"Just to ease your nerves – you are not in trouble." David was only slightly disarmed by this.

"Oh really, I'm glad to know."

"I have got a particular concern, David." Brian waited, watching David's response. "And I want you to know this from the outset – this is the reason why you are here." Brian spoke in a measured tone.

David felt confused with the pleasantry and suspected a deeper current to the meeting. He felt himself lose perspective of the office. They sat at a round table next to each other. Brian preferred to conduct his business at this table and maintain eye contact. This extended beyond the standard corporate power-play. David felt uncomfortable with the eye contact and his eyes skirted the office, fixed on an object, the white board, the filing cabinet, the bookcase, the view . . . the view, for a few seconds and then moved on.

"How long have you been working here now? It must be coming up to three years?"

"Around three years, five months."

"I want to welcome David to the team," Brian stood in front of the sales team for their Monday morning meeting. David had those small butterflies fluttering in his stomach. "David will be joining our telemarketing division, and he'll be focused on cold calling to generate new business for Account Managers (AMs). So, be kind to him as he may makes your jobs easier." There was some laughter around the boardroom and the plain, but obviously expensive, spruce furniture. The Account Managers were all immaculately dressed. Most wore dark navy blue suits, a couple had pinstripe, but they all had clean neat haircuts. "I hope you all take the time to introduce yourselves to him today, and make him feel welcome."

There were murmurs of "hi" and "welcome" around the table and the meeting moved on. Brian didn't stay any longer at the meeting. Monday morning meetings began at eight and finished just after ten. The sales team's weekly agenda would be set by the management. AMs ran through their diarised

appointments and made sales forecasts. There would be those weeks when sales had been progressively declining and the AMs would be told to cold call for new business. Cancel their appointments for the next two weeks and cold call. They would usually get a ribbing for half an hour or so and then be released for cold calls. David had seen female AMs cry after several of these meetings and male AMs who quickly started smoking.

David's agenda for this week was induction into the company, telemarketing training, and sales techniques.

He arrived home just after eight that night, tired and frazzled. His early morning nerves were a distant memory.

"I want you to understand that this is an impromptu meeting," Brian said. "I've been thinking about speaking to you for the last couple of days. Considering what I was going to say to you, but I only decided to have this meeting this morning." Brian looked around for something, stood, picked up his coffee, diary, and some papers from his desk, and sat down again next to David. "I believe it is important that you don't go away from this meeting disheartened. I don't know if you're aware of this but there are many people in this company who have a great deal of respect for you. There have been several times that I have discussed your future here with the Executive, which is the reason why we have been fostering your talents."

"I don't know what to say, but thank you," David felt uncomfortable with the compliment. However, he had not always found gratitude so difficult to bear. "I work hard and try my best," nor had a cheesy response been so easy to dispense.

"I know, and others can see that," Brian sipped his coffee. "Do you remember your first week here?"

"Yes."

"Would you believe I can recall that time too? You were straight out of university and frustrated in trying to find a position. I even remember you saying in your interview that you had sat through so many interviews if you didn't get this job you were considering returning to university."

"Yes, that's right."

"It wasn't probably the ideal comment to make, but this honesty was something which I look for in employees here and this was one of the reasons why you were selected."

"I'm glad I didn't go back. I don't think it would have been the same. I like it here." Cheesy response number two.

"Well, what was the first skill we taught you here?"

"Keeping to the script," David said.

Jim, the Sales Manager, had taken David for his induction week training. Jim looked like a smooth Insurance or Car Salesman to David. He had slicked back his hair with a ridiculous amount of hair gel and he carried an insincere smile that would make an appearance at the most inopportune moments.

"David, I'm going to teach you the most important aspects of sales. First of all I want you to remember that making sales is easy. It is all just a numbers game. The more people you speak to and pop the question to, the greater the chances you have to sell."

"Are you kidding?"

"No. David, I grew up in Kalgoorlie and worked as a bartender for five years before moving to Perth. I never thought I would be anything other than a bartender until someone said those very words to me." This was the first time he had mentioned Kalgoorlie, and David would find him slipping Kal into any conversation he could. Usually along the lines of, "I once drank for three days straight sitting on the same barstool with a couple of mates. Let me tell you what happened," or, "If you want a different woman every night," or, "My mother was a poor woman, David. I can't tell you what kind of life she had trying to feed five kids." David had heard these stories ad infinitum and had never dared to ask what type of woman lived in a mining town. "David, we have a second rule for sales here, and that is, you follow the script. If you follow these two rules we guarantee you will be successful, and you'll have an excellent career here."

They spent some more time with indoctrination

into the company and two days learning and rehearsing the script. After he memorised the dialogue they worked through his intonation so the delivery sounded natural.

This was interspersed with stories of Kal and Jim generally talking about himself.

Brian smiled at David's response, "That's right: keeping to the script. This brings me to my first concern David. We have come to understand that you seem to think, or even believe that the script does not serve a purpose in your telemarketing duties."

"No that's not true. I think the script is valuable, but . . . "

"Before you continue, let me finish." Brian had stated this calmly, without any threat of discipline.

"Sorry," David was nervous – uncomfortable with the situation. He felt out of place, like a caged animal, but also unsure of where he should be. Others had tried to warn him early about the telephone system, and David felt that he had been drawn into some kind of parallel Orwellian universe.

"Are you enjoying it here, David?" Emma was the Team Leader of the twelve telemarketers contracted there. She was young, outgoing and attractive in a glamorous kind of way. However, David believed her personality could have easily found her work in radio or television. DJs were no longer sound bytes, this role was occupied by telemarketers who called late in the week night. DJs were just talking heads.

"Yeah, I'm enjoying it here. It is such a different world, I never thought work could be like this." Emma held short team meetings after the Monday morning meeting. Emma would distribute their weekly workload and targets. The week would then be concluded by a Friday afternoon wrap-up. Emma would summarise their weekly performances and either reward or discipline them accordingly. Then the telemarketers would join the AMs for drinks and the General Manager's address (or, undress as it had quietly become known).

"I'm sure you realise that people talk in this office, just like any workplace. I don't know whether there is a business equivalent to the bush telegraph, but if there is it exists here." David was unsure where Emma was heading with this, and he checked the things he had said to ensure he hadn't spread any malicious gossip. He found himself captivated by her voice and her presentation. David had listened to Emma as she made telemarketing cold calls to sell subscriptions for a new gardening lifestyle magazine to go in direct competition with *Better Homes and Gardens*. She could find an easy rhythm to each call and carried this momentum through every call she made. Emma topped the team's sales most weeks, even though she didn't spend as much time on the phone as the rest of the team. "I want to tell you something so that you hear it straight from the horse's mouth," Emma wet her lips, "because I heard rumours not long after I started." And then she paused. "We do monitor telephone calls here."

Emma waited and checked David's expression. "Now, before you go into a spiel about civil liberties and invasion of privacy, remember this: We run a business here and we are accountable to our clients. If we don't sell our client's products then we don't get paid. It is as simple as that." David had found himself a little too consumed in Emma's speech and presentation to realise exactly what she had said at first.

"OK," David played with his tie in his hands, twisting it back and forth. "Thanks for telling me." He had only just completely familiarised himself with wearing a telephone headset. His hands were completely free, yet generally confined to the keyboard, while he talked. He was confined to this space, and position, from nine to five (which meant eight to six). It was mental paralysis as well and by the time he had realised what Emma had said she had wandered down several cubicles to talk to one of the other telemarketers. They laughed casually at something David could not hear.

"I don't know if you are aware of this, but we do monitor our telemarketers here. I'm sure there are many reasons why you might consider this to be unreasonable, but I want to tell you the reasons why

first. This way you can provide me with a considered response." Brian sipped his cold coffee. David considered it to be more a prop by which he could compose his thoughts. This must have been a tool he had developed through his self-defence taught management training. After he returned the coffee he pushed his diary and dislodged some papers from underneath. "We run a business, as I know you are aware, and as a result we have a responsibility. No, an accountability to those shareholders who provide us with our living. This accountability is extended to our clients to ensure that we provide them with a quality product. If we don't provide a quality product we don't make them money and we won't get repeat business. If we don't get repeat business then the shareholders become unhappy and that affects our living. Are you with me here?"

"Yes," was all David could reply.

"Good. Then you understand that we need to monitor the very means we have of providing them with business. If we don't do so then we can't provide any accountability in what we do. What was going to be your response?"

David had already played through a conversation in his mind, yet his answer was different, set in a different context, to provide a different response. "I understand what you are saying, however, I imagined my response to be placed in a different context."

"What do you mean?"

"It doesn't really matter does it, because if I disagree with you I would be best to reconsider my position here. The point is, I don't really disagree with the statement you made. In fact, I can rationalise it logically, but that doesn't mean I agree with it morally. But I don't want to argue this point."

"So, were you aware of the fact that the telephones are monitored, or was this statement a revelation to you?"

"I was aware of it. Emma pulled me aside and told me not long after I started."

"This was exactly as we had scripted it for her too. At the exact time and with the exact words. OK, so we agree on the fact that you were aware we monitor telephone calls?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"OK. So with this in mind, how can you explain your actions? I'm curious. I really just want to know for myself," Brian looked David in the eye. "No, don't answer that question yet. First, I want you to tell me if you can recite our Standard Sales Script?"

"Yes, of course I can."

"There is going to be one main weapon in your arsenal David and you will find it serving you in many situations, whether you are a telemarketer or an AM here." Jim waxed lyrical with one long, expansive breath, but alluded to the fact that there were prospects for David here. "It is the Standard Sales Script."

David had sat through several days of mind-numbing indoctrination into the company's Mission Statement, Sales Philosophy, Marketing Rationale, and Administrative Procedures. They had also presented hours on their corporate position within the market and a thorough SWOT analysis. David was invited into general discussion about these elements with questions like, "What kind of impact do you believe low staff morale can have on market position when profits are down?" David would try to respond, however, sometimes he was at pains to know what to say and they would just casually move on to the next question. It was late Wednesday afternoon and he felt mind-fucked already. Nothing at university had prepared him for this. No media studies tutorial discussions, especially those on whether Will Smith was a better comedian than Eddie Murphy, or what was the social impact of positive female stereotyping through the media in Australia, could have prepared him for this.

"So, you understand we are going to spend half an hour or so, going over the Standard Sales Script and then you can go home early. However, in return you are going to memorise this tonight so that we can cover delivery and intonation tomorrow. But you'll find this relatively easy. I want you to take notes and then I'll provide you with a copy of the script." Jim paused as if to consider what he was going to say next, began to speak and then stopped. Licked the

roof of his mouth with his tongue and then started again. "Through this script we will cover these steps in the sales call: Introduction, Rapport Building, Needs Analysis, Sales Pitch, Sales Teaser (or, If I was to offer <PRODUCT> to you now would you be leaning towards saying yes?), and Do the Business (or, Make the Sale). These steps are vital to a successful sales call and will be studied in greater detail on Friday."

"Sure."

"I am going to read the script to you first and then we'll go through it section by section."

"OK."

"Hello, <RECEPTIONIST> how are you? Good yes, I am good thank you. Could I please speak to <DECISION MAKER> please? Yes, I'll wait. Hello <DECISION MAKER> how are you? My name is <INSERT NAME HERE> and I am representing <INSERT PRODUCT COMPANY NAME HERE> and I would like to speak to you about . . . " David remembered his mind wandering off at this point – weary from several days' bombardment he'd experienced, his head was finally in a spin. It had been nearly six months since he had finished university and he'd been seriously job hunting during this time. His mind had slipped into the easy complacency of his new lifestyle free from study. He wondered at this point, what Jim was talking about and then tried to refocus his thoughts on the script. He doesn't recall the notes he made at that meeting. This half-hour of lost time. He remembers going home after finishing early (4.30), and he fell asleep just after six.

"Well, I am impressed," Brian said. "You're intonation was excellent. You have a subtlety to your approach, which makes it most convincing." Brian pushed back in his chair and stretched his legs out under the table, placing his hands on his lap. David felt more comfortable. "This is just one of the reasons why Emma suggested to promote you to AM. We talked about that just over four weeks ago at our weekly one-on-one. You can imagine how impressed I was to hear about how well you had been performing over the last six months. We privately review all staff on a six months basis. This provides us with a comprehensive overview of your performance. However, as you know, if your performance drops for two consecutive months you receive an immediate written warning leading to probation, and you have only received one of these over the last three years. That's very impressive considering the transient nature of sales people. Most leave on that first warning, but you didn't. That demonstrated that you have the persistence we look for in AMs."

"Thank you," David said dryly. He realised he had been forced into a gentle corner. Brian had built his confidence up. He had phrased all of his questions as closed questions so David could only agree.

Brian smiled and dipped his head as he said, "But this does not explain why you deviated from the script. Here, I'll play it for you so you know what I am talking about, and also to jog your memory." Brian turned and lifted the cassette player from the sideboard and placed it on the table. He pressed play, adjusted the volume, and then closed his eyes.

". . . if you've been feeling too much stress at work try taking Vitamin B. I read somewhere . . ." But David didn't really need any further prompting, he could remember it perfectly.

The week had started much as any other. The Monday morning meeting with Emma telling them they "have to set new standards to prove themselves and their worth to the company" this week. David had been given a monumental task with a short deadline (common work practice), but this had not yet entered his mind as he began performing some calculations. He had a sales target of $18,000 with an estimated six hundred calls required to make this target. A computer would provide them with statistics of their sales success and would also predict the number of calls each telemarketer would be required to make in order to reach their target. David had already established his 10 per cent commission on this target and began to calculate what every phone call would earn him. ($1800 commission divided by six hundred phone calls equalled . . .) Every phone call was worth three

dollars to David whether he made a sale or not. He had been told the work needed to be completed by close of business Wednesday. This then became easy motivation as David calculated that with two hundred calls per day he would be earning an additional $600 dollars per day (less tax) for the next three days. When he broke that figure down further (two hundred calls divided by ten hours in the working day), it meant he only had to make twenty calls an hour. What originally sounded like a monumental task was suddenly easy. Twenty calls an hour was easy and David began to coast a little.

This had been the feeling that had influenced him the most over the next couple of days. He made his targets easily and had given himself a bit of breathing room for Wednesday. He came to work on Wednesday and picked up with the calls, however he was bored with the process. He had a long and uncomfortable sleep knowing that he would have to come into work. This feeling had been building momentum over a period of time and struck as he struggled to get up in the mornings for work. The calls came slowly and each one felt more difficult. He couldn't stand the sound of the Sales Script from his mouth. He had become more casual with the calls he made and then wanted to change what he was doing.

He had just started talking to Jodie, a receptionist somewhere in some place David did not know. They had quickly started chatting and before David knew it she had him on hold while she answered another call.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," Jodie said.

"That's OK," David said. "It's not like I'm going anywhere. I mean I'm getting paid to talk to you and you're pretty much the same."

"I've been getting sick of work," she said. "I don't know what it is, but I come in and I am just tired all the time. I don't know what to do about it."

"If you've been feeling too much stress at work try taking Vitamin B. I read somewhere that just by taking a B complex you can help to relieve stress at work."

"OK I'll try that."

"You know I had a funny thought last night. I was watching *Dances With Wolves* with my girlfriend. She'd been nagging me for weeks and weeks to watch this movie with her and I finally agreed. We're watching this movie and I am really bored, you know? Kevin Costner's monotonous voice all the way through the film. But after they'd gone through that scene where the Indians find the buffalo the Westerners have just left to rot, I thought of this world we live in, and the corporate environment. That was what I thought it was all about, the companies were like the Westerners from that clip. Just going through and pillaging the landscape. Do you know what I mean?"

"No. No, I don't. Why was it you called?"

The rest of the day had faded into some sort of oblivion. David recalls that he came up short of the target and received a public dressing down in the Friday meeting as the rest of the telemarketing team easily reached their targets for that week. He hadn't been enjoying work that much since.

"So, tell me David, what were you thinking when you made that statement?" Brian said.

"I was under some stress at work, but also I feel bored with my position, and I made a mistake."

"No, but what were you thinking at the time when you said this? I'm curious." Brian stared at David.

"I don't know. I was just engaged in conversation and wasn't thinking much about what I was talking about."

"You understand the emphasis and importance we place on the Standard Sales Script?"

"Yes."

"We place great emphasis on following the script here." Brian reached out and picked up the papers which were underneath his diary. He looked at them and flicked through the pages – there were six or seven. He tossed them at David's side of the table. "Look at this David."

David picked up the pages and read them. "Conversation with David. Brian – David, I know you must be wondering why you are here?" David's eyes skipped down the page and then over to the next and his eye caught on some key phrases to confirm its

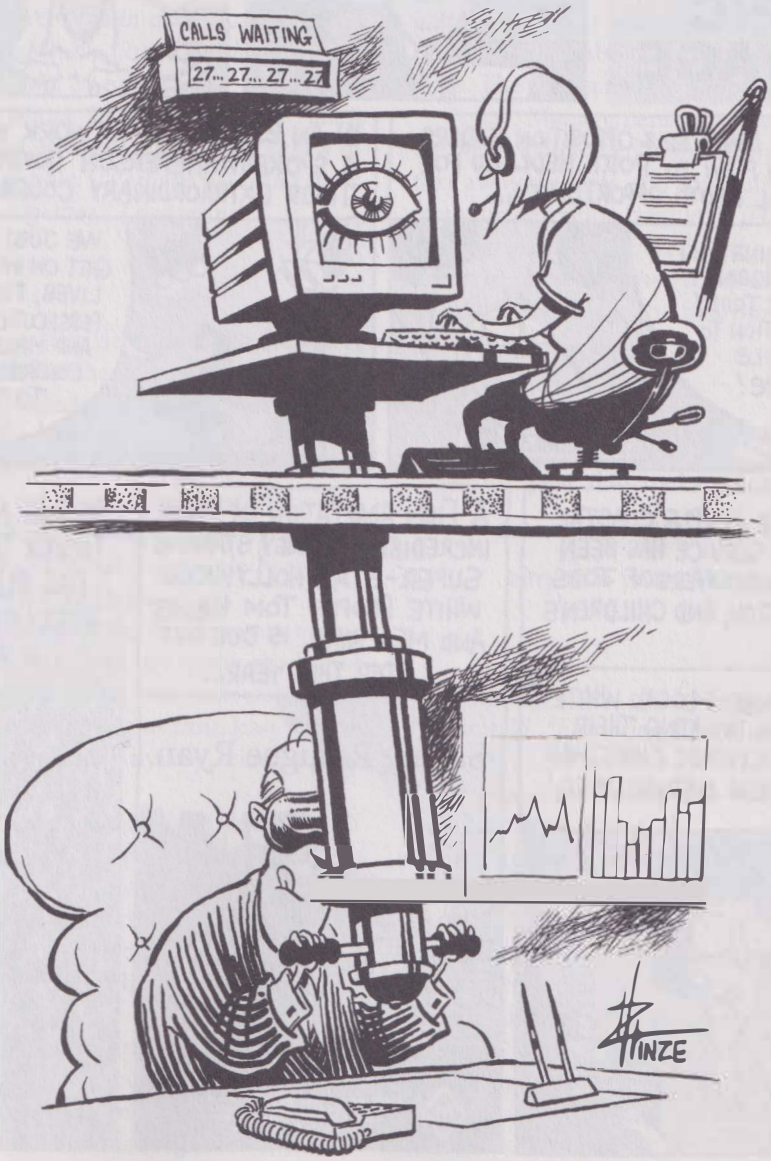
familiarity: "I want you to understand that this is an impromptu meeting", "You were straight out of university, and frustrated in trying to find a position", and, "but this honesty was something which I look for in employees here". David felt confused and he skipped ahead in the pages.

"Are you insane Brian? What is your problem?"

"David, we may discuss this later, however, what I want to offer to you is a potential job move to enhance your career prospects. I believe that you should consider leaving the company. I don't want to sack you, however, I want to give you the opportunity to get off to a good start somewhere else. So, I am going to give you a good recommendation as a referee on your resume and you can leave knowing it was the best option."

"Do I have any say in this?"

"I don't think so."




HEROES!
WHITE PEOPLE RESCUED AFTER EPIC VOYAGE
A BOATLOAD OF WHITE PEOPLE WERE RESCUED OFF THE NORTHERN COASTLINE TODAY AFTER AN EPIC JOURNEY OF SOME SIX AND A HALF THOUSAND KILOMETRES, THROUGH MONSOONAL HURRICANES & PIRATE-INFESTED WATERS!
ACCORDING TO RESCUE CO-ORDINATOR ADMIRAL JOHN HUNTER, THEY ARE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE....
DIFFERENTLY-COLOURED PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE GIVEN UP HOPE LONG BEFORE REACHING SAFETY!...
THE PRIME MINISTER & OPPOSITION LEADERS IMMEDIATELY FLEW TO PORT HEDLAND FOR AN OFFICIAL PHOTO OPPORTUNITY....
YOUR DETERMINATION TO SURVIVE AGAINST THE ODDS IS TRULY AN INSPIRATION TO WHITE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE!
IN AN EXCLUSIVE NETWORK INTERVIEW, A SPOKESWHITEPERSON DOWNPLAYED THEIR EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE....
WE JUST WANT TO GET ON WITH OUR NEW LIVES, FREE FROM PERSECUTION & POVERTY, AND MAKE WHATEVER CONTRIBUTION WE CAN TO THIS GREAT COUNTRY....
THE WHITE PEOPLE COASTAL RECEPTION SERVICE HAS BEEN SWAMPED WITH OFFERS OF JOBS, ACCOMMODATION, AND CHILDREN'S CLOTHES....
THE RESPONSE OF LOCAL WHITE PEOPLE IN DONATING THEIR BROKEN ELECTRONIC CHRISTMAS TOYS HAS BEEN OVERWHELMING!...
HINZE
A FILM ADAPTATION OF THEIR INCREDIBLE JOURNEY, STARRING SUPER-STAR HOLLYWOOD WHITE PEOPLE TOM HANKS AND MEG RYAN, IS DUE OUT LATER THIS YEAR...
Saving Refugee Ryan
IN THE MEANTIME, TICKER TAPE WELCOMES ARE PLANNED FOR EVERY CAPITAL CITY!

Nader and Tricia Bowen

Nader's diary

"WHAT DID YOU DO in detention?" I asked. "Well," he said, "just day after day, not much to do, pacing around and around an enclosure with about 1400 other people. There was no tv, no books, nothing really. But I kept a diary. It is written in Arabic." "Perhaps we could translate it into English together," I suggested.

The enclosure

WE HAVE NO NAMES in detention. We only have numbers. The number is based on when you arrive in Australia. Nobody knows you here by your name. Sometimes the lights around the centre make me laugh. So much like a football stadium. I don't know how people can sleep. The weather here is cold. We have no heaters except in the caravans. I see a sadness on the faces of the people here. It is depression and that is a bad sign.

We drove into the township of Woomera today, for a medical check-up. There are many models of weapons in Woomera. Rockets everywhere. It seems that the weapons are following us from Iraq. Where are we to go to escape them? Anyway, it is all a journey I suppose.

It costs $20 to buy phone cards in detention. If you have no money, you have no cards. The cards give you seven minutes on the phone. The queues are very long. There are only four water coolers in the camp. Some people don't go to sleep; they would rather wait in a queue all night just to drink some cool water.

I have a friend here. He is an air traffic controller. Yesterday, he made a kite from a garbage bag and it flew. After this day, many many people made kites. The kites are made from plastic bags, black, yellow and green bags. I will never forget this day. Looking up into the sky above our heads and seeing so many kites. The children were happy on this day. Singing.

Today, Management posted a notice saying that we were not allowed to make any kites and they will take away the kites, and any stuff to make kites with, from the detention buildings. *[He later described attaching small parachutes to the kites to carry cigarettes to those in other compounds.]* I phoned my family today. It was the first time since I arrived six months ago.

Tricia Bowen met Nader in February this year. He had recently been released from detention in Woomera, where he had spent almost a year. This is what he experienced.

"One day, I saw children playing with rubbish," Nader said. "Emptying bins and making up games with bits of old rubbish. I was so shocked with that. They were dirty, the rubbish was dirty. But they had nothing else to play with."

Emergency forces started coming in. Nobody from Management could get in. It was too dangerous. People threw stones at them and pieces of metal. It was dangerous. I was confused. Some of the men from Management were not good. They did not use good methods to treat people. It's 12.33 a.m., and it's still not over. The emergency forces used tear gas. I saw one person having difficulty breathing . . .

It's 1 a.m. and they must do a count. Everyone must wake up . . .

Nader also spoke of demonstrations, of protesting the conditions in the camp, of walking into the township of Woomera, welcoming the media, making banners that demanded freedom. He spoke of a local family in Woomera who gave them food and blankets, of remembering their kindness.

I would be happy to see nobody from those times. When I see people from Woomera, I am reminded of that time. I don't want to be reminded of that time.

The journey

"Most of my friends left Iraq years ago," he later told me. "I should have left when they did. Timing has never been my strong point you know."

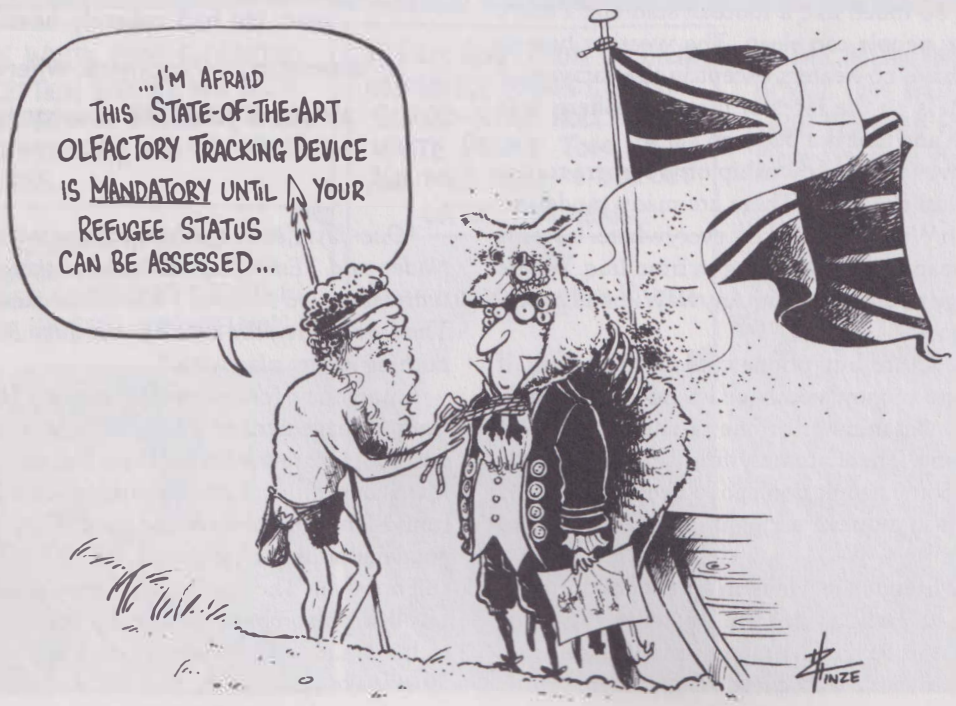
It's about 1 a.m. We arrive on the jetty. About 136 people: families, children. The boat is very small. My friend assures me that this is a good boat. They had an experience when they went out to sea on an even smaller boat; during the voyage, one of their friends died. He had gone to use the toilet. There was no toilet on board, so he'd had to use the ocean. He never came back. They could only assume he had fallen overboard. All of the crew had been distressed and frightened by this.

There was rain and wind as we headed toward Ashmore Reef. Some of the people on the boat are very anxious, very frightened, imagining that they are going to die. They start praying so loudly. The swells were unbelievable. The water rises and falls with our little boat bobbing along the top of the water.

"I had it all worked out," he said. "I'll choose one of the police stations that I see from the boat. I'll walk in, with my hands up in the air. Like this", and he motioned, "you know like I'm surrendering. Then I'll say, 'I want to give myself up. I know I came here illegally; but I'm hoping you can understand. It's a risk I had to take'." There is a blurry Polaroid shot of Nader, standing on the deck of the boat. In that one, out-of-focus moment, I could see a smile of optimism, of possibility. Here was a young man, finally free of the place and the government that had constrained him, out on the seas.

Nader spent almost a year in detention. This is not his real name. He is by no means defined by his experiences of detention, but cannot be fully introduced out of fear that identification will adversely affect his chances of remaining in Australia after his three-year visa expires.

Tricia Bowen is a Melbourne-based writer, researcher and teacher.



The Ungrateful Immigrant

If you are looking for one
Don't look further for he is here
Writing the poem about the hows and the whys and the nos

You expect me to be integrated into the mainstream
I don't care although I became a citizen
Not to strengthen your national identity as you like to think

But in order to travel more freely in the rest of the world
You expect me to speak English and write English
Which I can do but not so that you think I am English

But to do just what I am doing here
Writing poems that do not sit comfortably with your
Another day another dollar mentality and nationality

You think that because I came to and live in Australia
I should be grateful for the rest of my life
But you don't know that I already regret that I've made an irreversible mistake

And you have made a mistake, too, I think
Because years ago you promoted Australia in our country so aggressively
Why not be honest and say: We don't fucking want you Asians, PERIOD!

And you know what I think you should do to make me grateful?
Strip me of my citizenship and send me back to China in forced repatriation
Like you have done to so many of them

You think I am serious?
Of course I am not
What do you reckon?

Ouyang Yu

Nigel Hoffmann

Woomera

protests, baton blows and 'ringleaders'

WHEN PEOPLE ARRIVE at Woomera, they are photographed, fingerprinted, and all their possessions are catalogued. Their valuables, money and identification are kept by Australasian Correctionals Management (ACM) to give to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). Detainees were only ever referred to by a set of initials and a number. Each boat they arrived in was assigned a prefix: LOC, RAP, NIM, POK, etc. Then individuals were assigned corresponding numbers. LOC 12, for example, was the name you said when ticked off at mealtime checks, the name that you gave to medical staff, the name that DIMA officials called you by, the name broadcast over the PA system when you were called for an interview. These days, after some mild public outcry, ACM officers are supposed to use people's names instead of their numbers. Nevertheless, it is still often the case that they call out for NAN 49 or POK 81, and the detainee must take on this numerical identity to be able to be integrated into the operation of the camp: shopping, medical and legal services and work are still processed by the number. The numbers game is only one part of the psychology at Woomera; but it works very well to reinforce humility and enhances the power of the camp staff.

June, 2000

I WAS AT WOOMERA during the mass escape in June 2000, and at the time of the demonstrations, fires and rioting in August of the same year. These two events attracted media attention; but they were climaxes in a series of protests inside the centre. There were individual protests, hunger strikes, many suicide attempts – and they all seemed to be inappropriately dealt with. By June 2000, protests had been growing daily. By then, not one detainee in Woomera had received a visa. Many had arrived on Ashmore Reef and Christmas Island in October 1999: around eight months in detention. There was no evidence of any progress on even the most clear-cut of cases. So, in the afternoons, several hundred detainees would begin marching around the compound, chanting "We want freedom!"

ACM officers videotaped the protesters, arrested the alleged 'ringleaders' and removed them to the Sierra (Secure) Compound. This is especially threatening for people coming from places where arrest often means 'disappearance'. To see their loved ones and friends arrested is terrifying; but the officers often respond to such alarm with suggestions that the women are "hysterical" and the men are "going off again". Therefore, the arrests and isolations only exacerbated tension and increased protests.

Late on the evening of 10 June, detainees staged a sit-in at the far fence of the compound. While some made speeches, several began sawing through the outer perimeter fence with a homemade hacksaw. At 12:30 a.m., they rose and ran across the compound to the internal fence of the section containing those who had been taken to isolation. They threw mattresses and blankets up onto the razor wire and pulled the fence over while others scrambled across. Meanwhile, a hole in the outer fence of the camp had been opened. They then went through the hole, and out onto the road to make their way to the Woomera township. The Centre Emergency Response Team (CERT) drove ahead, and tried to turn them back with batons. They were however outnumbered by around three hundred men, women and children, who then marched the three kilometres into the Woomera township at 1.00 a.m., sat down in the town's square, and were surrounded by officers. All morning, additional riot squads were flown in from other ACM detention centres and prisons.

In the meantime, news started coming in from around the country that there had been mass escapes

from Curtin and Port Hedland. After the first escape, unrest in Sierra Compound escalated into a brawl between detainees and officers, who retreated and abandoned the compound. Subsequently, two riot squads moved into the compound. They put everyone to the ground with baton blows to the back of the knee. Around midday, another group of protesters inside the detention centre began shaking the five-metre razor-wire fence. They re-opened the hole made during the night, and another 250 detainees climbed through. They walked into Woomera to join the protest and when the two groups of escapees met in the town square .

Into the evening, the escapees stayed in the town square, negotiating with DIMA officials. They asked for the Minister for Immigration to meet with them and to give them some reliable information about their cases. Many had been to all three of their visa application interviews, but some had only been called for one interview. Without assurances they refused to return to the camp, and stayed overnight in the square, in near-freezing conditions. Only the children were allowed meals. In the morning, the local priest invited them to move to the churchyard, and so the group moved out of the town square. After being told they would only be allowed food if they returned to the compound, given assurances that they would not be locked in the Sierra Compound, and that the Minister for Immigration would visit the camp in a fortnight, a group of several hundred marched back to the centre, followed in the evening by the remaining escapees who walked or were driven back to the Centre.

August, 2000

IN LATE AUGUST 2000, a memo was distributed to ACM staff suggesting that 'trouble' was to be expected on 26 August. The World Council of Churches was holding prayers for refugees around Australia (Refugee Sunday), and there were three protests outside the few urban detention centres (Maribyrnong, Villawood and Perth) organised by others. There was a soccer game organised, with detainees invited to play at Maribyrnong, and a large protest of over one thousand people at Villawood in Sydney. Protests inside the camps had also been ongoing, organised mainly by women detainees and focused on the continuing internment of children. These protests included boycotts of the school and kindergarten, hunger strikes and suicide attempts. The regular releases that had begun in June and July of around eighty people a week had slowed to only fifteen a week by August. Extra security was flown in. Many detainees were responding to the increased traffic with a fleeting hopefulness: they thought there was to be a VIP inspection of the centre, they had seen the planes fly in to the airstrip nearby, and they had heard of the protests being organised through letters from family and friends.

On Friday, there was a large march by many families around the compound at Woomera. This was videotaped by ACM officers. Alleged 'troublemakers' were identified, and on Saturday evening moves were made to arrest those blamed for the protest. ACM interpreters attempted to convince management to wait until after Sunday to make the extractions, arguing that it would otherwise be provocative; but the officers went in to the compound with handcuffs late on Saturday night. When one of the detainees started shouting that he was being arrested, a crowd gathered and one of his friends threw a stone at the officers. CERT came in full riot gear, some more rocks were thrown, more officers came into the compound, and a running battle ensued for hours into the night, with many of the detainees now masked up.

Around 2.00 a.m. on Sunday, a large group began shaking the external fence. Water cannon was turned

on them twice; but they kept coming back to the fence. This was the first time water cannon had been used in Australia. The detainees did not disperse, and CERT fired a gas canister into the compound. A detainee rushed to pick up the canister and throw it back; but it was so hot it burnt his hand and he dropped it. (For the next few days, CERT watched the medical centre for anyone who came in with burnt hands, but no-one came for treatment.)

On Sunday morning, there were many red eyes at breakfast in the compound and tensions ran very high. ACM officers expressed frustration at several injuries but having scored no arrests. Again, they reviewed videotape. On Monday, at 4.00 a.m., they went in with riot squads to arrest two teenage boys, who they alleged were the ringleaders. When their family realised what was happening, they called out for help and a crowd gathered. Others began to throw stones at the riot squad; but the boys were carried out of the compound. Almost immediately, several detainees lit balls of toilet paper under the two demountable mess buildings and these quickly caught alight. Later that night in the bar, CERT officers sang along to the Bloodhound Gang; "The mess, the mess, the mess is on fire, we don't need no water, let the motherf_cker burn, burn motherf_cker, BURN!". Other buildings were set alight, and stones continued to be thrown at ACM officers, leading to the abandonment of many other buildings by staff. Within a few hours, the whole compound was taken over by the detainees.

A large circle of Australian Protective Service, Australian Federal Police and CERT officers dodged rocks from outside the fence, and then watched as the detainees began to cut the wire mesh. When a hole in the fence was opened, officers rushed in to mend the hole under the cover of water cannon. This continued, back and forth, many times throughout the afternoon. Eventually there was some negotiation and the situation simmered down. ACM officers returned to patrol the compound, and special riot teams enforced curfews for several days afterwards. The entire camp population was confined for most of the day while more arrests took place. Around thirty young men were identified from videos and moved to the Adelaide Remand Centre, and another thirteen or so were moved a few days later.

Many of those who lashed out at the compound had been notified that they would not receive asylum – the judgement is in English, which is difficult for many to read. The decision is ultimately not reviewable by the courts: a legal challenge can only review any procedural errors that may have occurred, not the merit of the decision itself. They can only wait and think the worst. A week or so after their refusal they are asked to agree to deportation; but of course, most people have little chance of returning safely to Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Palestine or Kurdistan, so they tend to decline the offer.

By late August, their patience and hope had run out and they had nothing left to lose. Even if detainees manage to gain asylum here, they are only eligible for a temporary three-year visa – that is, they are less than citizens. Many Australian citizens are protesting against the mandatory and non-reviewable detention regime; but when detainees react to the denial of their identity and future safety under the system, they are punished under criminal law as if they were citizens at the time of their alleged crimes – that is, their criminality is assumed to have been a deliberate step by them outside of the law, when the rule of law had never granted them any protection in the first place.

Ongoing demonstrations in detention centres are not, however, the tantrums of those refused entry; they are the struggle of desperate people who know they are being deliberately isolated, pitched against each other, and against the Australian public. In its first year, the Woomera camp had a mass escape, many suicide attempts, five major buildings burned down, riots, the deployment of tear gas and water cannon, and allegations of violence and racism against staff. Each time there has been dissatisfaction and frustration with detention, ACM continues to assume that the system is working, that it is isolated and isolatable 'troublemakers' who are responsible for protests, and so they respond by arresting alleged 'troublemakers'. The way that Australia treats "those who've come across the seas" reflects our deepest identity crisis as a nation. Despite all that has been said and written about Woomera, the conditions are, to this day, very much the same.

Nigel Hoffmann *worked as an Activity Officer at the Woomera Detention Centre for several months.*

Stuart Rosewarne

Globalisation: the new migration

THE RESURGENCE IN migration in the late 1980s and through the 1990s, especially to the advanced industrial economies, has excited the imagination of major metropolitan states. Despite the raft of legislation introduced throughout the developed world to regulate and stem the flow of people, this movement has continued unabated. This is held up as one of the major challenges confronting the modern nation-state. For some observers, efforts to restrict the flow of people reflect the desperate endeavour of states to reclaim an authority that has been consumed by the forces of globalisation.[1] The hallmarks of globalisation are the freeing of capital from the regulatory influence of the nation-state with world trade liberalisation, the removal of restrictions on the global circulation of money and investment, and the shoring up of this neo-liberal regime by international economic institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation. The increased mobility of people is regarded as yet another dimension of this phenomenon. The new migration, however, has been held to have a more telling impact in effecting the managerial impotence of the state because, in breaking the link between citizen and state, the mobility of people disintegrates the social and political foundations of the nation-state.

The argument that globalisation has underscored the spatial liberation of 'men, money and markets' from the nation and thereby emasculated the role of the nation-state is not without its contradictions. First, while there has been a resurgence in the migration of peoples, it is not as significant as is represented. Within Europe, where the European Union's Schengen Agreement provides for the unimpeded movement of European citizens among member states, the mobility of citizens is low, with just 2 per cent of EU citizens working in Europe outside their home countries.

Second, this resurgence in migration is testimony to the devastating impact of globalisation and the contradictory effects of capitalism's triumph; a triumph which has brought the collapse of other state formations, especially those of the former 'actually existing socialisms' and the remnant state systems of the colonial world, and the regulatory apparatuses that defined these spheres. The ascendancy of an unbridled market capitalism alongside efforts to capture the integrity of particular ethnic communities – both of which have served to unleash unparalleled levels of systemic corruption and regional conflicts – has brought political turmoil and economic chaos to these liberated worlds.

States' efforts to regulate the movement of people, especially among but no longer restricted to the advanced industrial world, has seen the re-marking of borders. Physical and regulatory evidence is in the erection of new ever-more technologically sophisticated and militarised barriers, the increased surveillance of borders, and in the legislation that strengthens the mechanisms to block entry. State restrictions on the movement of people have frustrated the possibility that globalisation might foster the liberation of people in a way that is comparable to the liberalisation of trade, international investment and the movement of money. Indeed the new territorial restrictions on the movement of people reflect a new partition within the global community, a refashioning of the international system of nation-states that signals the enhancement of the nation-state, or at least of one of the roles of the state, rather than its demise.

International cooperation against movement

THIS STRENGTHENING of the organisational and regulatory authority of the state, in relation to the entry of people, has been remarkable in its global reach. While there are continuing differences in policy and means, there has been a convergence in

methods of border control. There has been a high level of cooperation and coordination, particularly among the states of the advanced industrial economies in the formulation of asylum, refugee and migration policies. Bilateral, multilateral and international negotiations have occurred. The most focused negotiations have been within the EU, the basis of which has been the Schengen Agreement of 1985 and the Amsterdam Treaty that came into effect in 1999. The first provided for the removal of restrictions on the movement of European citizens within the borders of the member states alongside the tightening of external border controls. The second transfers responsibility for EU-wide migration policy to the European Commission – with the exception of Britain and Ireland which (fearful that asylum seekers would flood them) have opted to maintain discrete border controls.

The cooperation and coordination of border controls has also prompted some of the metropolitan states to project their authority beyond the nation to pressure neighbouring countries and former colonies with a view to strengthening their controls on the flow of people. The most orchestrated and pervasive illustration of this has been the pressure brought to bear by individual European States and the European Commission on Eastern and Central European states. Using the promise of admission into the EU, European states have pressured the latter to comply with the Schengen requirements. Offers of aid and technical assistance, equipment and training programs have compounded this pressure.

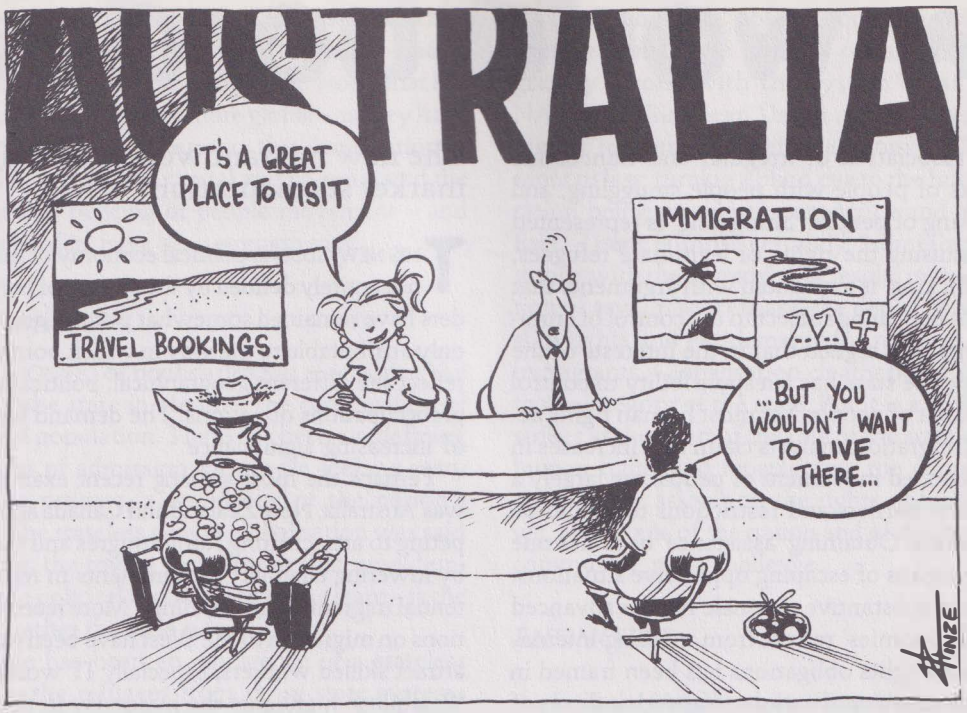
An integral element in these agreements is that the states beyond the EU concede re-admission agreements. These require them to accept the re-entry of those people not in possession of an entry visa and deported from an EU member state. To reinforce this, the EU has designated some of these states as 'safe country' states, allowing the EU states to repatriate third country citizens seeking asylum to the neighbouring countries. European aid programs have extended this web of international state-enforced migration controls beyond the European continent. Thus, the various efforts to strengthen the borders of neighbouring states, as well as the borders of those states that are geographically further afield, have established a buffer of people frontiers around the advanced industrial economies.

The reassertion of the regulatory authority of the state over people movement is no longer simply a question of migration management *per se*. The criminalisation of migration, security and policing along and beyond borders have become elements in the reforging of the nation-state. Inter-state cooperation in policing, data collection and transfer, have intensified the surveillance of people across the globe. Moreover, this role has extended beyond the apparatuses of the nation-state, with air carrier legislation placing responsibility for the first line of defence of borders with international airlines, ably supported by immigration and diplomatic staff.

The Australian Government has been active in promoting this new regulatory order. It is prominent in Inter-Governmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies; in the annual Four Countries Conference, which also includes Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States; and in regional groupings such as the Asia–Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants, and Pacific Rim Immigration Intelligence Officer Conferences.[2] The exercise of the authority of the Australian state extends well beyond its shores, with immigration officials working in conjunction with officials from other metropolitan states. Australia has also endeavoured to establish its regional frontier guards, negotiating with the Indonesian government to prevent vessels carrying people destined for Australia and, with assistance, set up refugee camps elsewhere.[3]

The international assault on the human rights of refugees

THE SIGNIFICANCE of these developments for the place and role of the nation-state in the international political economy cannot be ignored. Efforts to re-affirm the territorial integrity of the state and the authority it exercises over the movement of people have no obvious parallel. One benchmark this system might be compared with is the establishment of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade follow-



ing the Second World War. As was the case with the postwar Keynesian settlement, and as is also clear from the handling of the crisis in Yugoslavia, the re-fashioning of the inter-state system is not singularly focused. Global security and the formulation of strategic initiatives are increasingly being framed in terms of the management of people movement. NATO's intervention in Kosovo was organised quite consciously to minimise any exodus of refugees. And the UN High Commission for Refugees in Kosovo has been accused of pandering too much to the demands of European states wanting to protect their borders from an influx of refugees.

This re-forging of the global nation-state system is alarming. The building of barriers that prevent would-be asylum seekers from reaching territorial borders has compromised the system for protecting human rights. Increasingly, clandestine methods of passage are not a choice, but the only way in which safe borders can be reached. Such methods result in many being subject to abuse from people smugglers and traffickers and undertaking perilously dangerous journeys.

Prominent nation-states have used such irregular modes of transit as justification for the immediate repatriation of migrants, or the detention and differential treatment of those who then claim asylum, even when the way detentions are conducted constitutes a breach of UN conventions. The harsh treatment of asylum seekers is meant to discourage other would-be asylum seekers, as is the introduction of quotas on the number of refugees that states will accept – again in clear breach of UN conventions.

There is further cause for alarm: some parties to such breaches, most notably Australia and Britain, are now arguing vociferously for the 'modernisation' of the 1951 UN Convention on the Rights of Refugees and for 'reform' of the UNHCR. What constitutes a 'refugee' is being more narrowly defined than is provided for in the 1951 Convention, justifying the rejection of asylum applications, and Britain is seeking European agreement to narrow the grounds for the granting of asylum still further.[4] There have already been reductions in the rights and entitlements of those seeking asylum, and restrictions placed on residential mobility. New categories of entry permits, such as Australia's 'safe haven visa' or the EU proposal for a category of temporary protection for refugees, provide for short-term stays and put refugees under considerable pressure to agree to forego established UN convention rights.[5]

Politicians in the advanced industrial nations have sought to justify the new focus on border controls and the restrictions in several ways. One has empha-

sised the association of irregular and clandestine movements of people with people smuggling, and the trafficking of people. 'Smuggling' is represented as compromising the rights of legitimate refugees, while 'trafficking' is associated with arguments that migration is becoming subject to the control of criminal elements. It is argued that in the interests of the community, the state has a responsibility to control the movement of people. Yet most human rights activists and migration analysts claim that increases in the unsanctioned movement of people are largely a result of new barriers and restrictions to would-be asylum seekers. Obtaining 'assistance' becomes one of the few means of escaping oppressive situations.

The more substantive rationale for the advanced industrial economies' retreat from meeting international human rights obligations has been framed in terms of the capacity of nations to absorb influxes of migrants and in terms of budget-defined economic imperatives and the desire by states to reduce expenditure on social security, health, education. But these imperatives have to be regarded as one dimension of a larger parsimony that has shaped national agendas, that are now both more insular in character and more economically driven, and that has also resulted in the advanced industrial nations significantly reducing their contributions to international aid programs. This has entailed recurring contradictions in public justifications of more restrictive refugee policies, such as when the Australian Minister for Immigration publicly defended policy by pointing to the cost of processing applications, citing the figure of "around $10 billion" incurred by resettlement nations in processing 500,000 asylum applications, while reminding us that at "the same time, the UNHCR will be pledged around $1 billion to look after the interests of more than twenty-two million people".[6] The Minister can then proceed to argue that "there is something gravely wrong with the system when those able to engage people-smugglers can take places from the most vulnerable", while ignoring the much-reduced humanitarian commitments of countries such as Australia to international aid programs. The UNHCR has recently been forced to cut dramatically refugee support in the face of such hypocrisy.[7]

The new migrant worker and labour market segmentation

THIS NEW GLOBAL political economy of migration is not entirely defined by the closure of borders. Borders have remained somewhat porous, and this is not only attributable to the way in which border controls reflect the different geographical, political and social preoccupations of nations. The demand for labour is of increasing significance.

Perhaps the most striking recent example of this was Australia, New Zealand and Canada actively competing to attract Hong Kong émigrés and their capital by lowering eligibility requirements in regard to potential migrants' asset holdings. More recently, restrictions on migration to the West have been modified to attract skilled workers, especially IT workers.[8] Such 'flexibility' highlights the hypocrisy in the rejection of those asylum seekers deemed 'economic refugees'.

Another dimension of this modification of policy can be noted by reference to programs throughout the advanced industrial economies that facilitate the limited term employment of contract or seasonal migrant workers. Most of these temporary migration programs have been designed to meet the shortfall of labour in particular sectors of economies and/or shortfalls at particular times of the year.

Furthermore, large numbers of clandestine and irregular migrants are working in the advanced industrial economies. While the regulation of such migrants has captured the organisational imagination of the metropolitan states, the economic importance of clandestine migrant worker employment in the economies of Europe, the US, South East Asia and East Asia, cannot be overlooked. Indeed, the failure of states to effectively 'control unwanted migration', the failure to invest resources in 'internal controls' to police residency requirements, indicates that states are more than willing to condone the supply of clandestine labour. While railing against the entry of unsanctioned migrant workers, metropolitan states have in effect established *de facto* regulatory regimes alongside the *de jure* programs that claim to close the borders.[9]

The resurgence in the movement of people reflects the triumph of capitalism, but it also reflects its uneven development across the globe and the upheaval

consequent upon that triumph. Globalisation's challenge to the regulatory authority of the nation-state is being met with a re-partitioning of the world that has seen states becoming both more global – as they have promoted policies to underscore the liberalisation of trade and movement of capital and co-ordinated the regulation and policing of people movement – and insular, as borders have been strengthened.

Statelessness?

THE RE-HONING of boundaries has reactivated the role of the state in securing the composition of the national population. There has been a redefining of the terms of admission for people seeking entry and, in the process, a redefining of the nation's citizenry. The stateless person globalisation was said to engender, the roving globetrotter that would undermine the political foundations of the state – is the exception rather than the rule.

Yet there has been an emergence of a stateless populace – the refugees from those state systems shaken by conflict and economic collapse – who the fortified states seek to bar from their borders. An increasing number of people who have secured residence – through official sanctioning or *de facto* acceptance – are denied the rights of citizens. From detained asylum seekers, to those granted conditional or restricted refugee status, to the clandestine and irregular migrant workers, an underclass of non-citizens and residents with limited rights has been established. This civil marginalisation is underscored by the stigmatising of the new migrant and by policing and surveillance of the state. The movement of people here, as in the labour market, is enveloped in notions of criminality.

Critics who claim the new migration weakens the social foundations of the nation-state exaggerate the numbers of people moving. However, their critique shows the way in which the resurgence in migration has become associated with the formal exclusion of the new migrant from citizenship. Globalisation and the remaking of the state have spawned the making of a new underclass of non-citizens. This is not to argue that the partitioning within the nation is invariable. On the contrary, struggles abound that challenge this order. The regularisation programs in Europe (now beginning to be discussed in the US) point to the success of such challenges.

To re-render the observation of the Minister for Immigration: there is most certainly "something gravely wrong with the system" that results in NATO, the European Union and its allies obstructing the movement of refugees from the Balkans or, more or less, turning a blind eye to the human devastation being wrought upon Africa and the Middle East. There is most certainly "something gravely wrong with the system" that results in the incarceration of asylum seekers and the denial of full citizenship rights and entitlements for refugees and other immigrants. Globalisation clearly poses a challenge to the integrity of the state. But it is a challenge that strikes at the heart of the role of the state in securing human rights and representing the common weal, and it is the assault on the rights of humanity that we, as citizens of the nation and of the international community, must challenge.

ENDNOTES

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Mammad Aidani

I could feel it in my body

I WAS STANDING AT the tram stop on the corner of Bourke and Swanston Streets near Melbourne Town Hall, a day after the riot in Woomera had occurred. Feeling alone as I usually do in this place. They were talking, two white people, as if I and others were not there. It sounded as if they were giving a speech to a big crowd of well-wishers. With their deliberately loud voices, as emphatically as they could, they gave the impression that they wanted us to hear their conversation.

Their scorn and disdain was so strong that I could feel it in my body. My neck resumed its usual pain – that sensation that comes to me when I'm feeling abandoned in the confusing world of disrespect and dismissal. I felt as if they were talking to me, to remind me that I'm not wanted here because I looked like 'them', the 'others', those who come to 'take over': first were the Chinese, then Southern Europeans, then came the Jews and Vietnamese. And now, worst of all, Arabs and Afghanis, and even worse, the Muslims.

I started to cry inside. Their conversation was consuming them so deeply that perhaps our presence made no impact on them at all. Actually, I believe that our presence made their conversation more enjoyable for them. Because there were some Asian and Eastern European-looking migrants, a few young students and them, waiting for the tram. They fervently talked about zero migration policy. They used language that made me even more frightened, the vocabulary they used did not sound like they were either thugs or hooligans. No, it was articulate and precise, without any apparent emotion. It was the language of the master race talking to itself, for the sake of itself. This frightened me the most.

We read and hear that Australia is the most tolerant and fair country. Sometimes you hear educated people and experts talking about equality as if they must, as if they have to in order to publicly perform their social role of law-abiding, reasoned people. I hope that these two people, who also knew the language of rationalism, were not lawyers, cultural critics or immigration officers, just having a supposedly private chat. They were just sharing a private feeling, in this apparently private conversation, a tete-a-tete, an intimate exchange 'between friends'.

My thoughts turned to those in the Woomera detention centre in the middle of nowhere in the heart of the desert – not in Melbourne or Brisbane or even Mildura, but kept separate for reasons which were obvious to our two conversationalists. We all know that those in the camps escaped from dictatorial regimes and inhumane treatment they bore all their lives, and which forced them to make the riskiest decision to leave their country, to find a resting place where they could resume life.

Poet, playwright and novelist Mammad Aidani left Iran in 1979, and after living in abject poverty in Paris and Italy, migrated to Australia in 1982. Mammad lost his birthplace during the war between Iran and Iraq.

borders

The tram arrived, my tears emerged, we all entered the tram, which was warm and cosy. I did my duty and inserted my ticket into the ticket machine, then looked around to find a place to sit. There was an empty seat near our two conversationalists, who were happily continuing their whole impassioned discussion of "We wish they will leave us alone and stay where they belong." I looked at the empty seat, and all my senses told me "No, don't go there, you are not wanted." Then I looked outside at the leafless trees standing there so beautifully, reminding me of this radiant, sunny, cold midmorning.

I could not help myself, I looked at them again and they were still talking about the same topic. In that instance, I thought of Mister Ruddock, the Minister for Immigration, who insinuated that millions of people from the Middle East were waiting to flood our shores, and wondered whether this had impacted on these conversationalists, intensified their fears of the other. I asked myself, "Why do politicians around the world, when they are in trouble, play with this fear and churn up the emotions which put the weak in the even weaker position of being targeted as the reason for those troubles?" After this thought, I went into a deep silence. I wish I did not hear that conversation that morning at that tram stop near Melbourne Town Hall. It made me feel lonelier, helpless, and unprotected in this city.

Mammad Aidani has published a book of poems, Better Not to Explain *and a novella,* A Picture Out of Frame. *His plays have been performed at La Mama and the Belvoir Theatre.*

Wommora

In this refugee camp
its name I cannot even pronounce
I can see the hell
beneath this hostile sky
under which my ancestors in my homeland
revealed their poems and hopes and songs

I have told you that in my home a dictator reigns
Now, sitting feeling so lonely
my heart sinks
Looking through this hostile fence
At home I had a name
and here
a nameless name on your lists

I travelled in the basket of hope
To share my dreams with you and find a place
To breathe and soothe my pain of exile
I imagine you are sitting there
forcing me to believe that this arduous path I took
to come to your land was all in vain
and wanting me to go

Have you set up this place to wipe me out?
As the dictator elsewhere did?

I told you that I have only one heart
and that is full of pain
Let me smile, give me shelter
Give me a home. Can you hear me?

Gazing at the sky in this camp I can't breathe
Please give me some hope so I can regain
my strength to go on enjoying the sky and its stars.
In this land.

Mammad Aidani

Tseen Khoo

Penal Posturing

Australia's Patriotic Muscularity and the Myth of a 'Fair Go'

AUSTRALIA HAS HAD two centuries of border anxiety and racialised identity crises. Angst about defining what it means 'to be Australian' stretches into all aspects of society and particularly into debates over immigration trends. Decisions about 'who' is allowed in affect what Australia will become in a few generations' time, what an 'Australian' will look like in the future. Here, I argue that the Government's tough-talking stance encourages racialised representations of the new groups of 'boat people'. Australia's supposed need to re-assert the integrity of its borders against more landings has less to do with sea-arriving asylum seekers *per se* than with a perceived inability of these arrivals to be 'good Australians' or even 'real Australians'.

Globalisation is often defined as the erosion of established borders in the interests of free-moving capital and information. In an environment of multinational empire-building, the placement and enforcement of national boundaries is perceived as under threat and, therefore, becomes a source of anxiety. Australia's track record of invasion paranoia and legislated xenophobia lends itself to panics about losing 'white Australian-ness' through being overrun by 'non-white foreigners'. Moreover, metaphors of climatic disaster used in (over)representations of onshore asylum seekers assist in the dehumanisation and subsequent demonisation of "Third-World-Looking Ethnics".[1] An article titled "Human tide on a sea of misery", evokes the particularly lurid motif of a "rising tide of human flotsam being washed up on WA's shores".[2] As Peter Mares and others have argued, such inflated prose feeds existing anxieties of a population already made fearful by economic uncertainties:

> By playing on deeply rooted popular fears, the government has engendered a mood of crisis around the issue of boat-arrivals and promoted an attitude of hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees. . . . There is a deeply held, yet irrational anxiety that Australia is perpetually in danger of being overrun; that our sovereignty is brittle and our borders are weak.[3]

In Australia, the idea of globalisation is selectively manipulated to symbolise a loss of national autonomy and to legitimate certain economic avenues, such as exporting, as unprecedented opportunities for the nation to prosper. This double-sell involves consolidating and simplifying Australia's diverse communities so the pitch can be more broadly appealing. The pejorative 'un-Australian' tag has been bandied about by all sides of politics and unpacked by only a few critics. When Philip Ruddock echoes the sentiments expressed on talkback radio by the likes of Ron Casey, it is not surprising that Australia's policies lean toward stronger punitive measures, a particular focus on 'the bottom line', and fewer humanitarian considerations. Mike Carlton coined the term "wackenhutted" to summarise the process of corporate, racialist detention in Australia and its attendant genericised criminality.[4] The term aptly reflects the practice of mandatory and non-reviewable incarceration, and the vehemently distributed presumption that asylum seekers are, first and foremost, opportunists without a validly desperate set of circumstances.

The type of exclusionist language used by the Government and parts of the media includes a perversely broad range of Others, with the typical stereotypes of 'Asians' in Australia easily transferred to

current detainees. That is, these new communities are portrayed as tainted by criminality, carrying disease and a threat to civilised society. Because recent arrivals have been of Afghani and Iranian background, there is the added slur of an assumed 'fundamentalism' (restricted, of course, to the non-Christian kind) and associations with terrorism.[5]

This familiar stereotyping of the unfamiliar is insidiously supported by some resident minority communities who encourage (and even compete with) the Government's smug and inflexible policies. The 'Model Minority', for instance, can just as easily participate in the manipulation of racialised images to represent new groups of refugees as threatening, misbehaving, and greedy. The Vice-President of the Australian Asian Association, Mel Fialho, was quoted as saying that "illegal immigrants are placing too much of a burden on Australia's resources and possibly spreading disease".[6] If Fialho was speaking on behalf of the Association, then it is obviously a body which has been successfully inculcated with the 'divide and conquer' mentality of the present Government. Further, Fialho asserts that all 'illegal immigrants' must be treated 'equally,' regardless of ethnic background or 'race'. His attempts to be 'colourblind' on the grounds of 'fairness' neglect to mention the automatic discrimination that such rules impose on those who do not speak English as a first language (or at all), and it also presumes that refugee/migrant processing systems are fair or indeed 'colourblind' in the first place.

Far from being a bias-free zone, the process of deciding whether to allow someone into the country, assessing the level of overstaying 'risk,' or to stay as 'bona fide' is a fraught one. Bureaucratic proceduralism supposedly grants a professionalism to the administration of decisions and makes the practice objective. But, as Robert Miles points out, there is an

> 'instinctive' exercise of power which permits racialised, sexualised, class-based cultural discourses to come into play through the professional common sense of the immigration officer implementing control. Power is exercised through the agency of subjective evaluations performed in the guise of professional competence.[7]

Seemingly neutral, but inherently biased, evaluations are made on a larger scale in Australia: the Government actively pursues the smaller number of overstayers who are 'third-world-looking ethnics' as opposed to the largest numbers of overstayers, those from the UK and the USA. Apparently, some overstayers pose less of a risk to 'our job security' than Others. Discussing the appeals system for those whose applications for refuge have been denied, Justice Gray states: "It is all too easy for the 'subtle influence of demeanour' to become a cloak, which conceals an unintended but nonetheless decisive, bias."[8] So much rests on an applicant's aura of credibility when it comes to claiming refugee status that the racialisation of asylum seekers in the media and by the Government is tantamount to sabotaging their chances of any balanced assessment. In *Borderline*, Mares outlines the manifest conflicts of interest in the appointment of senior DIMA staff and Ministerial interference in the workings of the Refugee Review Tribunal. A faultlessly 'fair' mode of refugee claim assessment is a myth propagated to justify detention. The implication running through many of Ruddock's statements to the media is that 'real' refugees are assessed expeditiously and released, and it is only the non-bona fide who are causing trouble in the detention centres. Therefore, the poor conditions in the camps should not be a source of concern, but instead celebrated as a mechanism for discouraging 'illegal immigrants'.

Ironically, after whipping up hysteria over asylum seekers, the Government now poses as the voice of reason. The recent rioting at Port Hedland and escapes from Woomera prompted locals to request the removal of the detention centres. Ruddock's response amounted to this: "the construction of a large, barbed wire and galvanised fence would continue, although in a different colour to appease neighbouring residents concerned about declining property values".[9] The focus on tighter fencing around the detention centres to 'appease' the residents, as opposed to addressing the concerns and processes which are the source of disturbances, typifies the Government's 'cart before horse' approach.

It is not without significance that Ruddock's solution in this case was to create taller, more sophisticated fences. The increasingly punitive and expensive measures undertaken "in the fight against boat people"[10] reflects the single-minded attitude taken by the Government when it insists on proving (to whom?) that 'Australia is not an easy target for people smugglers'. When a boat turns up on a West Australian shore, more money is poured into enlarging and 'beefing up' security, more coastal surveillance,

and campaigns overseas which promote Australia's hard-line stance. Responding to such a stance, Hage turns accusations of 'fundamentalism' back upon the Coalition, pointing to its "political narcissism".[11] This narcissism is most apparent when the Government insists that the 'right' version of nationalism is one which does not undergo too much reflection. To paraphrase Howard, if you need to ask what it means 'to be Australian', then you are not – and cannot be – a 'true Australian'. Carlton characterises this as "our national orgy of patriotic backslapping".[12] The Government's refusal to connect feelings of compassion with those of national loyalty creates and enforces the sentiment that 'our' safety and security arises only through the act of repulsing Others. Moreover, the vilification of asylum seekers has been so successful that future releases may engender more opposition than the Government could control. Scapegoating accompanies the racialisation of asylum seekers, as the Government talks up its hard-line policies and sabotages any sympathy by remarking almost exclusively on the intolerable load they pose on the legal and welfare systems – which have been subjected to severe cutbacks and 'reforms' by the same Government.

In their attempts to woo back the Hansonite splinters in their electorates, conservative politicians are keen to foster a blinkered narcissism on 'the problems in our own backyard', where 'our' perspective tends to mean disgruntled 'white', male. For instance, Amnesty International (AI) once again expressed disappointment that the practice of mandatory detention continues. In their report, they also condemned the policy of mandatory sentencing, the failure to act on incidents of Aboriginal deaths in custody, and the style of 'reconciliation' endorsed by the Coalition.[13] Howard immediately defended his version of 'reconciliation', and ignored every other concern AI had raised. This defensiveness was echoed in relation to the UN Protocol for Women, various reports by UN Committees on mandatory detention, and the Kyoto Treaty on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.[14]

Ruddock concentrates on boasting about the many punitive measures Australia has implemented and how much more is spent on 'illegal immigration' than other nations. This bravado is a bipartisan and transparent

strategy, with the "Labor Party [concurring] with the Government's rhetoric and tough measures to show [that] politicians are 'doing something' to protect health and jobs".[15] When a Parliamentary Report into detention centres in June called for a number of modest changes in administration and amenities, Ruddock dismissed the integrity of the Joint Parliamentary Human Rights Subcommittee by declaring that they had "not had sufficient life experience". He went on to rule out considering any changes to mandatory detention.[16]

The swagger of 'one-upmanship', with ever-tougher border controls and punishment of those who would breach them, has become commonplace. Ruddock stresses how 'generous' Australia has been in offering humanitarian aid and places to offshore refugee applicants. Yet, Australia spends almost seven times more incarcerating asylum seekers than assisting with international efforts at refugee sites.[17] The fact that it fails to lead in any comparisons of refugee intake with other First World countries, does not stop him insisting that Australia is already doing more than its fair share. Such rhetoric exemplifies the manufacture of hyper-real marine borders – and a sense of their vulnerability. The use of detention as a deterrent is vehemently opposed by the UNHCR, and yet the Government deploys this tactic consistently, proudly and explicitly. The pathologising of refugees in the Australian socioscape long outlives whatever political expediency these tactics might have for the next election. In talking tough, ramping up detention and security procedures and mobilising a fear of being thought a 'soft touch,' the Government's penal posturing bestows a damaging, cynical legacy which voids any notions of a 'fair go'.

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Mayday at (and from) Port Hedland

ALMOST NINETY PER CENT of detainees at Port Hedland, we all gathered together and we had different banners. More than five hundred joined. It was an international action because we are from more than thirty-five countries here, including from twelve African countries and Arabs from all over the world. Our banners were showing that we are asking the other people around Australia and all over the world . . . we are fighting against our situation in this camp. Right now, you can still see not far from the compound, there is a water cannon, just to incite people.

The main things are detention itself, ACM and DIMA, the slow process, and especially the conditions in this place. There are isolation blocks. These are really like hell. Inside these blocks, it is like you are not alive: no information. Some people came here almost a year ago and they are still in isolation.

These are the things that we want to talk about. We had things on our banners like "Release the Refugees, Deport Ruddock!" The main thing is: "Release the Refugees", because this detention is against international law. Asylum seekers are not to be detained. We said many things, so many things that we cannot even finish talking about it! Because the conditions are very bad, the process is very slow – and we cannot even understand the process. It makes things so difficult. Our message is that we would like the Australian community to understand the pain and frustration that we asylum seekers are going through in these hellholes – that is what you can call them. It is very hard.

I know that many people do not know the truth about this thing, because they only listen to the media. Some of the media only tell them what the Minister tells them, what the Department of Immigration tells them. We are asking others in Australia to know that we are asylum seekers, people who fled their country for various reasons: political reasons, religious violence, and many other things. We are not criminals.

You know what we call the dialogue between the deaf, the dumb and the blind? DIMA, the Almighty, that is what we call them here. They are the masters of the game, they decide everything. They do not listen. They do not tell you anything. When they want to do something they just send the robot. ACM is the robot, which is dumb, it cannot speak. When I ask them, they do not know anything, they just execute! All these things make us blind, we cannot even see anymore.

We come here in search of freedom and justice and a better life. When you come you find it is like you have run away from the lion and find yourself in the jaws of the tiger. When you come here, you are not informed. DIMA and ACM do what they want because of a lack of communication. The other week, three people came from DIMA. I think the third person, he said he is the manager of unauthorised arrivals, or something like that. He called us together. He had come to tell us we have to leave Australia as soon as possible. He said that their law says we have to leave this country. We try to ask him questions and he says he does not know.

That was very frustrating. What can I say? They want to take us out of this country to go back to where we fled from, where we left because of persecution, and they want to make us go back there. They do not even think! They do not think how precious human life is.

J. is a detainee at Port Hedland (name withheld).

borders

Anna Szorenyi

Economies of Speech and Silence

The Refugee Determination System

a)

At a forum called *Refugee Women Speak Out*, I was given a copy of a statement from a woman who had fled Afghanistan. After submitting three applications under the Special Humanitarian Program, she is hoping for an interview with the Australian High Commission. "You certainly understand", she stated, "that we grew up in a conservative society and our pride did not allow us to mention the misers [misery] of our life in the paper." She describes the abduction of her son, being taken hostage and beaten, witnessing several killings and rapes, the bombing of her village, the disappearance of her son and her husband's family, and the beating of her daughters on the street "until one became unconscious".

b)

At a conference of academics and those working with refugees, Kerry Murphy, a solicitor who works with asylum seekers, describes the process of application for asylum in Australia for those who arrive by boat and without a visa. First, applicants are interviewed to determine their arrival method. The applicants are not told they can ask for a lawyer. Based on their interview a bureaucrat in Canberra decides whether they are eligible to apply for a temporary protection visa. If so, they must fill in five forms. Murphy described the difficulty he has in getting refugees to tell their story to him in less than two hours. Imagine, he says, that you have just fled from a country where saying the wrong thing can get you killed. Now here complete strangers face you. This man says he is a lawyer, but can you be sure? And who is this interpreter? Where are they from? Would you launch into tales of your persecution, torture or rape? Would you disclose your identity, and those of your family, some of whom are still in danger? Trauma counsellors tell him that forcing asylum seekers to relate their experiences can retraumatise them. But without their stories, he cannot make a case for them to stay. His ability to help the asylum seekers is complicated in that there is often only one telephone among hundreds or thousands of detainees. He cannot adequately speak with his clients.

Anna Szorenyi gives a snapshot of some of the abuse and violence uncovered in her recent investigations of the treatment of refugees in Australia.

c)

At this same conference, Peter Mares, *ABC* journalist, related how Dr Alsalami, a prominent member of the Iraqi community, was called in to Curtin in February 2000 to help negotiate with hunger strikers. Several of the hunger strikers had sewn their lips together with needles and thread. Able to open their mouths barely half a centimetre, their words were only just understandable. Eventually Dr Alsalami talked them into letting themselves be unstitched. "The Australians do not understand," he explained. "They will think you are crazy." Indeed, when the media reported it, they described the action as "bizarre".[1]

d)

Four Corners interviewed asylum seekers for a documentary. So as not to put them or their families at further risk, their identities were concealed. The camera focused only on their mouths, the screen filled by lips, teeth and tongues, pronouncing over and over again: "I am not criminal. I am refugee. I am not criminal. I am refugee." When DIMA hired contractors to deport these asylum seekers, they were handcuffed and had their mouths covered with packaging tape. When they continued to protest at their deportation, they were forcibly sedated.

e)

Controversy has recently surfaced over the use of language tapes to attempt to determine the national origin of asylum seekers from the Middle East. Applicants are required to speak for five minutes into a tape so that their accent can be analysed and used to challenge their claims.[2]

THESE ARE STORIES OF ABUSE, deliberate violence and callousness, which is reason enough to retell them. But there is also a theme here: they are all transactions of speech, revolving around who is speaking, who is not, who is allowed to speak and for whom, what can be gained and lost by speaking, by not speaking, and by being identified as a speaker. And in being heard even when one can speak. According to Murphy refugees are often not aware of the need to speak when they arrive, but they soon realise that their survival depends on it. This is an economy in which the relating of trauma becomes a currency that must be exchanged for legitimate status as a refugee. It is also an economy in which the powerful maintain their control by alternately forbidding and demanding speech.

Speech and silence can have contradictory meanings. Feminism has long sought to rediscover women's voices and the voices of the oppressed, seeing silence as a sign of "passivity and powerlessness".[3] On the other hand, silence can be a privilege reserved for the powerful who hear and judge another's confession.[4] Translated to the institutional frame of asylum applications, a 'conservative' silence can constitute a failure to adequately 'confess'. Having thus failed to confess, asylum seekers are 'screened out' of the application process. In the face of this they must actively struggle in order to speak, write and be heard. By contrast, the authorities attempt to silence all attempts at communication between those in the camps, and between those inside and those on the outside. At its most extreme, self-imposed silence can become a means of protest.

The episode of lip-stitching might be seen as an attempt at what Spivak has called "subaltern speech".[5] Speech itself having been appropriated by the authorities, protest takes place through silent, non-verbal action. The extent to which subaltern speech remains impossible is illustrated by the media reception of the hunger strikers. Already constituted as those who are morally and culturally "uprooted",[6] their actions are not understood as meaningful; protest is seen only as strange, incomprehensible, the bizarre craziness of the dislocated other.

This attitude highlights the reason the subaltern cannot speak: "speaking itself belongs to an already well-defined structure and history of domination".[7] To speak at all within the traditions of Western history is to claim a position as someone that perceives the world in a certain way and is recognised as knowing the 'truth'.[8] Those who are not seen as occupying this position may speak, but their words are likely to be misunderstood or taken as untrue. Asylum seekers encounter a paradox here: they need their words to be taken as true, but they are also required to declare themselves as victims, as those who by definition do not occupy a position of power and whose words are therefore suspect. While the whole issue of speaking is complicated by language difficulty for many, the issue is not only that of translation but of whether anyone is properly listening. What is at issue, then, is belonging. To demand that a refugee speak is to demand that they already be like us, already belong. Moreover, to simultaneously forbid speech is to deny the possibility of belonging.

But the very explicit and violent nature of the *enforcement* of silence upon asylum seekers suggests

that they are *not* always previously defined as not worth listening to. After all, many of those who are forced to flee are articulate, sometimes intellectuals, whose very ability to speak may have been the source of their persecution. What we are witnessing, then, is less the inevitable subaltern status of the refugee than the active attempt to *impose* subaltern status. That speech, in this context, should become such a highly policed commodity is hardly surprising. Paradoxically, the institutions of state authority might be said to be confirming Spivak's assertion that the subaltern cannot speak.[9] If the subaltern cannot speak, then those who have been silenced will be good subalterns. After all, active, speaking 'ethnic others' represent more of a threat to the national identity than those who are passive and 'domesticated'.[10]

It is on the shores of Australia, then, that trauma becomes identity: to gain a place within 'normality', it is necessary for the asylum seeker to define themselves as those who have been victimised – raped, excluded, abused, shamed – and thus as the excluded, the abnormal. The only correct answer to the question 'Who are you?' becomes 'I am a victim.' The horror the asylum seeker sought to escape is completed – they are forced to identify themselves through the exclusion and shame their abusers have imposed upon them. What does it do to someone to make speech the condition of survival, and to make it impossible except under limited terms? To make abject helplessness a condition to be aspired to and proclaimed? To make 're-traumatisation' the price of salvation? What can be said in response to such a situation? Who can say it? Some learn the strength to participate in the economy, using it to tell their stories and to gather support. But those who are 'screened out' or whose applications are denied are not given that opportunity. Perhaps the only way to protest in such a double bind is to sew one's mouth shut; as if to declare both, 'Look what has been done to me' and 'I will not participate in your economy. Silence is my speech.'

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Whatever Happened to the American Dream

they cross the border looking
for a promised dream
they enter a land that once
belonged to their ancestors
these conquered souls of Mexico

they toil in fields of abundance
harvest fruits and vegetables
with stooped backs and blistered hands
at pay no white man would toil for
in a land built by immigrants
it now calls its enemy

A.D. Winans

new world

A. Curtin

THERE WAS AN EXTREME level of frustration in the centre. There are lots of different isolation areas inside the perimeter fence separated from the general population. Most are kept in isolation for ten months. There are four isolation areas, two prison areas – one of them is a total observation area, where they watch the person twenty-four hours a day.

People decided to break the inner fences so that they could join each other. They were tired and frightened from the isolation and wanted to know why they were kept separate for so long and why the process for their application was taking so long. The people did not want to make a fire, but they were desperate. ACM left the centre, the residents tried to control the fire themselves. They had to break the kitchen window to get the fire equipment to put the fire out. The people put the fires out themselves. After everything was over and there was no activity, the guards came back. Everything was quiet by then.

When the guards came back, they asked everyone to go to the end of one of the compounds so they could find out the 'ringleaders' – that is what they called them. They did not mention the safety of people or care about it. A few hundred people went to the end of the compound. They made the women and the children separate from the men. They tried to arrest some of the men to take them to the isolation area. They said, "Help us, we are innocent." Three men went to help them. The officers used batons. One of the ACM officers threw canisters of tear gas, burning the skin. One canister fell on top of the people who would not go with the guards. One fell on a man who tried to help. One fell on top of the ladies and the children who were standing separate. They were staying to be witness that they were not harming the husbands. We were so surprised that they used this method and ignored and denied the safety of the people. There was no need to use this

method because nothing was happening when they came back into the centre. The ladies and the children suffered from the tear gas. The children were crying, one had a bleeding nose and there was a newborn baby in the group.

The women did not want to stay in the polluted zone and moved away. But the officers made the women and the children go back. The women tried to leave that area and take the children. When they tried to explain, ACM beat them with batons. Then the husbands tried to be involved to protect their families and the officers beat them. Six or seven [guards] onto one man on the floor, kicking his head and all over his body. Two were taken away unconscious, one was dragged away along the floor. This was the wrong tactics, the wrong response. What happened here, the people wanted to show their disagreement with the treatment by the officers and ask why they should be kept there, people who are here for two years without a primary decision. The procedure is long, long.

The men (twenty-eight of them) were then taken to the 'Hotel', an isolation unit consisting of two dongas [demountables] with ten rooms in each. The officers then blocked all the windows and all the air-conditioning outlets by nailing wood across them. The only gap where air could get in was a strip at the bottom of the door. The people were frightened and broke the door and broke the glass in the boarded-up windows. They came out holding pieces of glass and threatened to harm themselves. This was the same night. They said we can't stay in there, we're going to die, "You want to kill us in that room".

All twenty-eight were taken to Derby police station. When the officers were beating one of the husbands, a lady grabbed a chair and tried to throw it at the officer. He was a very big man, the officer. They try to destroy any compassion, any sympathy between family. It was the worst way to solve the problem – to beat the people who defend themselves. The ladies who have the bruises from the batons should make a complaint but they are scared. They are allowed to make a complaint to the police but they are told they have to go through ACM. This denies human rights.

There is a right to make a complaint. It has been tried. One father wanted to complain about the treatment of his son. Three times, he was badly treated. One time the officer threw hot water over his son. The son is ten years old. But the police say go through ACM. Once a drunken officer was holding a man on the floor and the man was shouting, "If this is Australia, I hate Australia", and four or five officers were beating him and then pushed his pregnant wife to the floor. His little girl and boy were begging them not to treat him like that. They put him in isolation and then he went on a hunger strike. They took him to the police station, to the lock-up. When he complained to the police about ACM and DIMA, the police did not listen. The policeman showed the middle finger and said, "Shut up! You just shut up!"

Often if they are in the lock-up it is ACM who takes care of them in the police station, not police. And if they ask ACM for a toothbrush or a shower they don't give it. This is why people are afraid to make a complaint. In the case of the father who wanted to make a complaint about the ACM officer hurting his son, the officer scared the father. The officer told him that he would have to hold his son's hand for twenty-four hours a day. The father asked the officer if that was the law, that he had to hold his son's hand twenty-four hours a day. But lots of children need to play and an area to play in. Any children in the world have a right to play.

A. does not wish to be named because it might risk his application for asylum.

new world borders

Damien Lawson

The Movement of Labour

IT'S HARD WORK in the kitchens, preparing, cooking and serving food for hundreds of other people locked up in the detention camp. But how else do you get the money for a phone card, or for extra food for the family? Perhaps organising protest and strike action could improve wages and conditions. Last time this was done, it was violently put down and people were taken away, locked up and deported to Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

They ran, dodging speeding vehicles and armed men pursuing them through the tomato fields. The Riverina flatlands provided little cover and they had little warning. Eventually, they were hunted down and roped or cuffed together: "Degraded and demeaned", they are "tied up like cattle". Forced to sit in the dust, they waited to be processed, locked up and then deported to Indochina, Indonesia, Philippines and China. The AWU called for higher wages for fruit pickers, presumably so that 'illegals' wouldn't undercut Australian workers' wages.

It was cold and dark when they began the trip to work. Car-pooling to cut down the travel costs, an hour or more they would be at work in the market gardens of the Yarra Valley. One morning, however, they never got to work, but were pulled over at a roadblock of Immigration, police and tax officers. They were processed, locked up and then deported to Vietnam. The AWU welcomed the police operation as necessary for the protection of "Australian workers' jobs".

These are some of the stories of the 50,000 or more 'illegals' who exist in the margins of the Australian labour market. Their numbers swell when you include people on bridging visas, temporary protection visas and other 'legitimate' visas that allow limited working rights – which theoretically provide some legal protections, but in fact ensure people are forced into the most precarious forms of work.

The enclosures

THE EXISTENCE of millions of immigrant workers, throughout the countries of the global North, reflects the intensity and violence of global economic restructuring that has occurred over the past three decades. The extension of capital's control over the planet's resources and people's labour has required the systematic destruction of people's independent means of life – much like the process at the dawn of capitalism when English farmers' and peasants' land was enclosed forcing them to sell their capacity to work to the emerging industrialists.

This founding violence that has underpinned the extension of capitalism over the globe through five hundred years of colonialism – the slaughter, dispossession and integration into the labour force of indigenous Australians is just one example – has not ended, but rather has been augmented by new forms of domination. The structural adjustment programs and debt driven development of the IMF and World Bank, famines, war and environmental devastation are all part of the process of extending market control into all areas of life and therefore ensuring people must first work and then increasingly work harder to survive.

This contemporary form of capitalism is not restricted to the South. The economic rationalist or neo-liberal assaults on various social gains – welfare, public utilities, education and health care, etc. – achieved through social democracy or socialism, as well as those of postcolonial states, have had the same aim. This global process of 'new enclosures' aims to

remove any guarantees of subsistence, whether they are derived from indigenous farming or social security, and therefore extend and intensify control of capital over all areas of life.

Exodus

HOWEVER, people's refusal to remain locked in the new poorhouses of the world has driven a global exodus. They are part of one of the most significant mass movements in human history, over fifty million people who leave their homes hoping for a better life, fleeing economic dislocation and exploitation, famine and war, environmental devastation and political and religious persecution: some (very few) are classified as 'refugees'; most are labeled 'economic migrants', 'guest workers', 'phantom workers', 'shadow workers', or 'illegal aliens' and therefore have limited or no rights in their new country. Regardless, all reflect one of the means through which people are attempting to resist and refashion the immiserating and deterritorialising effects of the new globalised world.

To some extent, global capital and governments have welcomed this movement or directly facilitated it. Whole regional economies from southern California, to Saudi Arabia, to layers of the workforce in Europe and regional Australia rely on guest workers or 'illegal' immigrant labour. However, such acceptance has always been on capital's terms, whether in the use of illegality to keep down wages and conditions or the controlled admittance of 'skilled labour'. Therefore, exploitation of such new pools of labour relies on the ability of capital to control its movement, hence the walls of Fortress Europe, the wire and guns along the US-Mexican border, the concentration camps in the Australian desert. Ultimately, this movement is irrepressible. People find a way across the wire of the Mexican border, take perilous journeys on the backpaths into Europe, undertake heroic and dangerous voyages in unseaworthy vessels to Australia, or spend their savings to obtain visas or airflights. They resist the attempts to maintain their status as labour subordinate to capital's command.

The (Australian) labour movement

FACED WITH the fact of this global movement, how have we in the union movement responded? The dominant view is that articulated by unions such as the AWU and reflected in the policy of the ALP: the interest of the Australian worker is tied to the interest of the national economy; we must control the intake of labour into this country and compete with the rest of the world. An alternative is that of con-

struction unions. Recently, the NSW Branch of the CFMEU attempted to ensure that stonemasons working as 'guest workers' were paid proper wages and back pay after more than three years working for under award wages on a temple project in Canberra. Unfortunately, this campaign contributed to a push for increased penalties for employers who use undocumented workers or workers in breach of their visa rather than for an extension of rights. A more systematic attempt to organise undocumented workers is the campaign to improve wages and conditions of outworkers by the textile and clothing workers' union (TCFUA).

These CFMEU and TCFUA actions prefigure a possibility of seeing undocumented workers as a vulnerable sector of the labour force that could and should be a priority for union activity. However, they generally don't go the crucial next step and recognise that it is workers' status as 'illegals' that allows such hyper-exploitation, and that this is the key to changing their relation to employers. In the case of the temple workers, it was the workers' status as 'guest workers' rather than 'illegals' which enabled union officials to feel comfortable with supporting them: "we need to keep making the point that these are not illegal immigrants, they are here legally and they are being exploited by unscrupulous Australian companies."

What this indicates is that while, in the main, the labour movement has left behind the prejudices of the White Australia policy and racism towards indigenous people, we are still entombed in the paradigms of the last century. This not only has terrible consequences for those who move, but is fatal to our capacity to defend and transform the status of labour, including our own, within the global economy.

Alien-nation

AS WE HAVE SEEN, the global transformations of economy and society have evoked the movement of people. This has brought about an overlaying of this version of entitlement with concepts of 'multicultural' or 'ethnically diverse' citizenship. The various versions of multicultural liberal democracy now are the dominant nation-state form within the global North. But it is clear this idea of the nation-state retains as its ideological and practical necessity the exclusion of the non-citizen from its sphere of entitlement and protection. Arguably, the dominant ideas of the twentieth century were all organised around the central principles of the nation and production. The inevitable outcome of this over-determination of strategy by the concept of nation was that citizenship, whether tied to 'blood' or 'nationality', became the key to social or political rights.

So far, the labour movement has been unable to include the excluded within our frame of reference except as a threat to 'Australian workers' or as a 'victim of employers' to be assisted in exceptional and limited circumstances. Even the significant involvement of union leaders, particularly Trades Hall Council and the ACTU in support of 'genuine refugees' locked behind the wire or an 'increase in humanitarian immigration intake', remains pressed within this nationalist paradigm.

Regardless of the humanity or otherwise of accepting the increased militarisation of border policy, with all its consequences, such an approach undermines our capacity to resist the process of neo-liberalism. Surely the only way to win in the race to the bottom, is to stop running the race and join with the other global competitors. The quixotic defence of a 'national economy' and a privileged sector of workers within it will not ensure our protection from the forces of global capital. Only by recognising and acting together in common struggle, regardless of our country, can we hope to stop the downward spiral we are all in. The mass global movement of labour is only a threat to wages and conditions if we accept its criminalisation.

Possibilities

OVER THE last decade in Europe, a growing movement has resisted changes to asylum laws and border policy. The 1996 demonstrations throughout France marked a new and significant plateau in this struggle. Resisting the deportation of the *sans papiers*, the 'undocumented', people called for "Papers for all!". Demanding residency papers for everyone means that all should have the full rights of citizenship in the country in which they live and work.

This claim is now a central part of the North American labour movement's new strategy. Last year, the American Federation of Labor and Committee of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO) called for an amnesty for seven million illegal immigrant workers in the United States, recognising that "undocumented workers and their families make enormous contributions to their communities and workplaces and should be provided permanent legal status." At a recent Los Angeles rally in support of immigrant workers, AFL-CIO Vice-President Chavez-Thompson said, "Time after time, we see employers try to divide us from our sisters and brothers. They try to pit immigrants against non-immigrants, documented against undocumented, and try to drive down the wages and working conditions of all."

In July, the Italian trade union movement supported a call for a citizenship strike against the G8 summit in Genoa. The central theme of the strike was an attempt to recognise those made invisible by G8-led global restructuring – immigrants, the unemployed, students, pensioners – but who are, in fact, crucial to the functioning of the global economy. These are the unwaged homeworkers who reproduce social life, the illegal immigrants who labour in the dirtiest and most low-status jobs, students who are training for work in the new economy. They are all victims of this process of enclosure; they all are forced to work for capital. They are all subjects that a labour movement should seek to organise and reflect.

A change?

THERE HAVE been moments in the history of the labour movement, when the dominance of nationalism has been overcome, when we have recognised that our freedom and dignity depended on the freedom and dignity of others. Solidarity actions, while significant, have generally operated within a framework of national struggle, as the national defence of workers in another country. Perhaps the practice and theory of the First International – 'workers of the world unite' – or the International Workers of the World is a better example from which to derive some sustenance and inspiration.

The new global situation demands of the union movement an articulation of political goals that adequately reflects the transformations that are taking place now. Are we able to recognise that the movement of money and capital, and hence much of our misery, is in part founded on the capacity to cage people behind borders? The global movement of labour is a reality. Limited and channeled by capital as it is, this movement will grow. The strategy of the labour movement must reflect this new reality. A demand for *citizenship rights for all that live and work* in this country can be a beginning.

Damien Lawson has worked for and been a member of a number of unions. He also participates in the group No One Is Illegal.

Meeting the New Arrivals

for Philip Ruddock & associates

I knocked on the door
(of course I did)
but it flew open
so I just walked in

I got a shock
(I can tell you)
dirty clothes everywhere
and that bin smell – woooo!

One light bulb
hung from the ceiling
not a fitting in sight
and all the paint peeling

A woman, a man
five kids were standin'
under that bulb
looked like they were wonderin'
('spite the window bein' open
and the wind blowin' through)
why their bulb was straight, not swingin' –

– and they were starin' at me
no joke, it's true

I said, "How ya goin'
what's happen', what's up,
when'd you move in?"
(I knew, but I humoured 'em)

And they stood still
like I'd drawn a gun
'til the bloke said,
"No English, please . . .
from where you come?"

(He asked me – You believe that?)

I said, "From next-door, over there
past the fence, near the shrub
over the hedge, up the road
past the shops, down the river
up the country, down the Prom
up the Mallee, over yonder
me old fella, the back a Burke
the Big Red Centre
then back down the Hume
to a spot called Canberra
worst joint in creation
you'll find me office there, mate
it's called IMMIGRATION!"

"So," I said, "you mob, what's your caper
has anyone here got any papers?"

Course, Your Honour
I found nothin' like that
no passport, no visa:
I dragged 'em outta the flat

What else could I do?
What more can I say?
the law's the law
I hand 'em over to you . . .

Paul Mitchell

Angela Mitropoulos

The Barbed End of Human Rights

We are the detainees in Curtin camp. Derby. We are suffering inside the camp. Where is human right. – Detainees from Curtin, written during the hunger strike in February 2000.

WHERE ARE HUMAN RIGHTS? This seems a relatively simple question; trying to formulate a plausible answer, it is anything but. Indeed, it is the most troubling question we confront today because it re-opens the corresponding questions of who 'we' are, of the relation between this 'we' and the humanity that is presupposed by human rights, and of whether 'we' and 'human' might mean the same thing. And, much is at stake here, not least for those who take flight with the expectation of going to a place where human rights do exist. To the extent that successive governments have presented Australia to the rest of the world as a place where the rule of law, freedom of speech and human rights are adhered to,[1] and insofar as such things are an important part of the national self-image, the question 'Where are human rights?' is the astonished response to a promise that has not been fulfilled.

The changes to the *Migration Act*, tabled by the Labor Government in 1992, abolished the rule of law in this area by making internment of 'designated persons' extrajudicial and mandatory. The incommunicado detention of new boat arrivals,[2] the confidentiality contracts that camp staff must sign, as well as the institution of the Temporary Protection Visa[3] – whose terrible precariousness ensures that those released from the camps remain under threat of deportation for three years – all amount to the denial of freedom of speech. Yet, the immense distance between the promise contained in assertions of a commitment to certain values and the reality of the camps cannot, I think, be explained as an anomaly, or as a contradiction between ornate expressions and grim reality. There is something else at work here that transforms *this particular* discrepancy into a coherent view, albeit one so ill at ease that it can only be repaired through ritualised panics, hatreds and resentments or, at best, a therapeutics whose aim is to restore calm to the national psyche.

The im/materiality of human rights

IN 1996, the bipartisan *Parliamentary Statement on Racial Tolerance* was adopted. The first line reads:

> [that] this House: reaffirms its commitment to the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect, regardless of race, colour, creed or origin.

The principal conditional phrase in this statement is not "regardless"; it is "the right of all Australians". That is, 'Australian' is the condition and limit-point of being tolerated, having equal rights and respect. It is worth recalling that this statement was prompted by the emergence of One Nation and the major parties' attempt to, symbolically at least, distinguish themselves from it. Having, then, shunned a vernacular xenophobia with the seemingly disinterested vocabulary of citizenship, governments merely affirmed their power to deny the human rights of people who are not 'Australian', whether by way of legal certificate or cultural norm, and in many instances both. This is not a move common only in Australia, even if the approach to undocumented migrants here has been particularly malicious. The problem was already in place before Australia ever existed.

From the beginning, the inherent dilemma of human rights doctrine has been the question of the source or foundation of right. Without restating a lengthy

discussion, there have been two main answers to the question of 'by what right' there is such a thing as human rights: right is founded by the law or sourced to a divine power. Over time, the tension between these two positions has worked itself out in such a way that the former response has prevailed. The materiality of human rights is *the* question one is always confronted with, even if this cannot be reduced to its juridical answers – I will return to this. In other words, despite the derivation of human rights concepts from Christian doctrine, the question of the reality of human rights – of where they are – is unavoidable for anyone who hopes that the promise will not be constantly deferred to some hereafter.

Here our difficulties only intensify. Advocates of human rights cannot avoid the fact that human rights rely on a sphere of determination (for historical reasons, the nation-state) that, from the beginning, was less the assertion of human rights in any universalisable and inclusive sense than the inauguration of a power to grant rights and to not grant them according to a particular division: citizen/non-citizen. Put another way: whilst the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Citizen and Man* announced the Rights of Man, it did so on the occasion of the inauguration of the French Republic, an entity with the power to bestow rights and to determine their exceptions and limits in territorial terms – with terrible implications for those who take flight. This is true even for the American Declaration. For while it leans more toward a divine authorisation of human rights, it too is inextricably linked to the founding of a power that limits those rights on the basis of citizenship. That is, human rights become in practice, and more often than not in rhetoric, civil rights. In other words:

> The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were human.[4]

As McMaster notes in *Asylum Seekers: Australia's Response to Refugees*, those who are not or cannot obtain citizenship are routinely "classified as aliens; they have no legal, political or social identity" and exist, from the perspective of nation-states, as non-persons, not human.[5] It is by no means anomalous, then, that those who are interned at Woomera have been referred to as 'animals', nor that the caging of undocumented migrants appears as self-evident to so many – this is nothing other than the exercise of an authority to de-humanise that sovereignty presupposes.

Therefore, the camps do not indicate some insufficiency in human rights law, the absence of a bill of rights or similar. The law – as the installation of a sovereign and jurisdictional authority – does not secure human rights; it both grants *and* denies them at its discretion. The Minister for Immigration was recently asked by a reporter, "Is there an anomaly with people who ended up with a piece of paper, citizenship, as opposed to those that didn't, being able to stay, and those that didn't getting deported?" His reply: "Well, it's not an anomaly, it's the law."[6] The fact of the law magically resolves the anomaly in favour of the law because there is no higher power than the law. This is the meaning of sovereignty, that no other power is superior, including the power (and right) of humanity. It is this discretionary pose of sovereignty that is put into play when people assume the right to declare who does or does not belong in Australia. Many times, this right is assumed by those whose belonging is apparently assured by a British colonial inheritance, a gesture indisputably 'familial', and therefore biological or racist. Other times, statements to this effect are made in an effort to prove just how much, and despite not being part of the colonial 'family', one does belong, that conversion is possible. In both instances, what is at issue is the personal appropriation of a morsel of sovereignty, and identification with its discretionary, boundary-setting authority.

BUT IF THESE LIMITS were intrinsic to human rights declarations from the beginning, today we are forced to confront those in the unprecedented context of a globalised nationalism – with all the ambiguity in that phrase intact. Nation-states now cover every inch of earth's surface. As a global system, this is administered by various international institutions, most notably the UN. The UN's various conventions and protocols, far from providing a place for a universal humanity, secure the right of nation-states to discriminate. The UN is, after all, an assembly of nation-states. This discrimination is approved in many ways, not least by a classification system that permits one set of reasons for movement while criminalising another. Indeed, those movements that

fall outside UN definitions of 'refugee' are those most clearly associated with capitalism, its processes and the role of its institutions, above all, the nation-state. This is increasingly so, and connected to the changing role of the nation-state at the end of the Twentieth Century.

In previous centuries, proletarianisation was characterised by a wave of rural-to-urban migration within Western Europe triggered by the enclosure of the commons. And, where large-scale movements across the globe occurred, they did so chiefly as part of an imperial advance into the 'new world'. Only in the past twenty years have people moved in any significant numbers from Asia, Africa and Latin America to North America, Australia, and the EU countries, and only since after the Second World War have they moved in large numbers from 'non-core' to 'core' countries, thereby reversing the global colonial flows of previous centuries. Even so, around two thirds of overall movements still occur within and between 'third world' countries. This is increasingly circumscribed by inter-governmental agreements and United Nations' population controls, as evidenced by the use of so-called 'safe havens'.[7]

Moreover, the migration that has always accompanied proletarianisation is now faster and larger than at any other time in history. When the UN's High Commission for Refugees was established in 1951, those classified as 'refugees' were estimated at 1.5 million. In 1980, this figure had increased to 8.2 million, and by 1999 had soared to 21 million.[8] This figure does not include those fleeing starvation, land clearance programs (including those demanded by the IMF and World Bank), the rivalries that have been fabricated and resentments aggravated by the imposition of austerity programs.[9] Nor do they include so-called internal migrations, such as those that have been occurring in China and constitute the most dramatic example of the enclosure in history. From 1978 to 1995, the area of land under cultivation in China decreased by 12.6 million acres as land was cleared of peasants and transferred to industrial production. In 1994, rural-to-urban migration was estimated at 60 million; by 1998, it was 80 million.[10] This is being repeated, albeit on a smaller scale, in Papua New Guinea, East Timor, Southern Africa, Mexico and elsewhere.

Prior to the twentieth century, the nation-state system was not world-encompassing. Since then, "the nation-state and the nation-state system have rendered citizenship a universal requirement for *the legal sanction of human existence.*"[11] This is the context in which the widening net of the world market, the enclosure of the commons, proletarianisation and related migrations become immediately a question of border controls. This has transformed the political landscape into one where freedom of movement constitutes a direct challenge to the principal role of the nation-state in capitalism: the power to regulate labour supply and to establish the contours of labour market segmentation. Moreover, as financial and trade flows increasingly came within the purview of large credit agencies, financial markets and inter-governmental trade agreements, the role of the post-cold-war state resolved down into that of controlling and, in many instances, criminalising the flows of people. This is the actual content of declarations of sovereign right today. As prior instruments of national capitalist management were ceded to international institutions or currency markets (by floating the currency, for example), national economic management became little more than the control and management of people as labour. This is why in 1992, the program of privatisation, austerity and the massive increase in unemployment ushered in by the Labor Government's 'recession we had to have' was accompanied by the tabling of the most vicious border laws since the White Australia policy. That is, less a scapegoating exercise than a separation of the hitherto twinned assumptions of Keynesian statecraft: management of money and labour.[12]

The limits of citizenship

NEVERTHELESS, it is not possible to pose the question as entirely one of citizenship or, rather, to assume that our question (where are human rights?) is answered by it. *Asylum Seekers*, an impressively thorough account of the connections between citizenship, 'othering' and the policy of extrajudicial internment (among other things), concludes by proposing the granting of "social citizenship" to asylum seekers.[13] Engaging as this is, citizenship – whether 'social' or 'full' – does not amount to the attainment of human rights. As McMaster rightly notes: "Universal schemes for citizenship have foundered on the necessarily local character of citizenship, a resource that is maintained while specific boundaries exist."[14] Therefore, the very idea of universal citizenship is oxymoronic: any actual univer-

sality would make citizenship redundant. The only way an absolute correspondence between human and citizenship would be maintained is if death is the means to police the boundaries of this universal citizenship. This is the fatal conclusion of the militaristic humanitarianism mobilised during the NATO bombing of Serbia, and which forecasts the global state that would police a global citizenship.

Similarly, McMaster notes the analogies between the figure of the citizen and that of the consumer. Nevertheless, he does not explore the broader scheme in which this takes place: the commodification of people. Whatever else might be said of citizenship, it is analogous to the rise of the market in more than the reconstruction of personhood as consumerism. Citizenship, as a model, was carried forth by an emergent bourgeoisie and conceives of humans and human interaction in, above all, marketable or exchangeable terms. Citizenship contains the premise of an indifference to qualitative differences between atomised individuals whose quantifiable aggregation forms the basis of political decision and concepts of democracy (one person – one vote). This is the paradigm of the marketplace, where commodities, including humans treated as commodities, are brought into relation with each other (associated and exchanged) as quantitative differences measurable by money. Struggles to make citizenship more inclusive are indispensable, particularly if the processes of labour market segmentation (and divisions between workers) are at issue. Ultimately however, these struggles should be seen as a part of the historical process where humans are defined increasingly according to a logic of the commodity. Were humanity and citizenship to be made identical, and this identity enforced by a global state, those humans who constitute an opposition to commodification, or who resist being subsumed by such, would be the social equivalent of 'rogue states'.

So, where are human rights?

THERE ARE WAYS to avoid this question, to set it aside as if it had not been asked or as if it has only been asked rhetorically – which is to say, as if its answer was already contained in clauses of various UN conventions, or the question itself merely polemical. This is what Peter Mares, an ABC journalist, more or less does in *Borderline: Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.*[15] *Borderline* is certainly worth reading for its dismantling of the slogans of 'queue-jumper', 'bogus' and 'illegal immigrant'. But its eventual limits are established by its avoidance of the question – where are human rights? – from the start. The book begins with reports of the hunger strike at Curtin in February 2000, which includes this: "men would rise from the crowd to speak, to rouse protesters with the chant 'Where are human rights? Where is freedom? We want freedom'."[16] Overall, Mares' fascination with another aspect of this protest (that several of those who went on a hunger strike sewed their lips together), and with coming to terms with the media's response to this, overwhelms his (and potentially the readers') attention. What Mares implicitly depicts as an act of self-muzzling was perhaps rather an attempt, however futile, to deter the force-feedings that were a routine response to determined hunger strikers in the past – a decision, in other words, that death was preferable to internment. Indeed, given that the detainees did communicate their demands and their questions, Mares' interpretation of the protest implicitly serves to reconstruct it as an enigma, whose explanation inspires the journey that is *Borderline.*

But it is a journey whose limits were already signalled by setting the question of human rights aside, and which re-appear later, when Mares admits with obvious discomfort that he finds it difficult to not assert limits to human rights, and to do so at some arbitrary and unexamined numerical point. His comments are worth noting:

> the minister laughs. He knows he has found the weak point in my position – a loose end that cannot be neatly tucked away . . . But where would I, as a heart-on-sleeve liberal, draw the line on people seeking asylum in Australia? . . . I am forced to confront the fact that the imagery of waves and floods does not simply wash past and leave me untouched; deep down I share some of the popular fear of invasion, if only on a subliminal, irrational level.

He avoids the chance to explore this fear because he consoles himself with the thought that the prospect of tens of thousands of asylum seekers is "abstract and irrelevant".[17] Had he accompanied the question of 'Where are human rights?' he might instead have asked himself (and the reader) whether, if Queensland was steeped in famine for a decade, for instance, he would still have had invasion nightmares when Queenslanders began making their way south. Does the recent rural-to-urban wave of migration that has been occurring in Australia conjure up the idea of a flood? Who do we include in 'we', in our idea of who is human and who is not?

Hassan Jamshidi, detained at Villawood and having attempted suicide, said:

> If I knew that they (Australians) were so inhuman and did not value a human being, I would never have come.[18]

Jamshidi, perhaps because for him everything – life itself – is at stake here, tells us where human rights are: in one's ability to recognise the humanity in another, without the demand that they look, speak, act like us, and more importantly, without delegating this ability to recognise another's humanity away to transcendental authorities whose structures presuppose alienation. Whether God or the law – or indeed capital – are decreed as sovereign, in each case this sovereignty consists not in the recognition of universal human rights but in the stipulation of who has the right to be regarded as human, and who has not. In this way, there is always a space created for those who are excluded from the community and from definitions of humanity: non-citizen, non-believer and the uncommodifiable. So, the troubling answer to the question 'where are human rights?' is this: we kept company with humanity only once, on the day of its internment.

ENDNOTES

1. For example: Department of Immigration's media release, 6 October 1997.
2. N. Poynder, 'The incommunicado detention of boat people: A recent development in Australia's refugee policy', *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 1997.
3. Refugee Council of Australia, 'Position Paper on Temporary Protection Visas', http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au
4. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1979, p.299.
5. D. McMaster, *Asylum Seekers: Australia's Response to Refugees*, MUP, 2001, p.162.
6. 'Insight: Crime and Punishment', SBS, broadcast 19 April 2001. The report was on the impending deportation of a number of people, languishing in gaols after they had finished their sentences, who had previously been granted refugee status but had not become citizens.
7. For more on the UN, see *xborder*, online at http://www.antimedia.net/xborder/
8. McMaster, p.9.
9. Aufheben, 'Class Decomposition in the New World Order: Yugoslavia Unraveled', online at http://lists.village.virginia.edu/~spoons/aut_html/Aufheben/yugo.html
10. Zhang Xianchu, 'Some Legal and Social Issues Concerning the Rural Labour Migration in China', unpublished paper.
11. Spybey, cited in McMaster, pp.184–5.
12. This topic is dealt with in more detail in Angela Mitropoulos, 'The Exhaustion of Social Democracy?', *Left Business Observer*, No.92, 9 November 1999.
13. McMaster, p.188.
14. McMaster, p.178.
15. P. Mares, *Borderline: Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers*, UNSW Press, 2001.
16. Mares, p.10.
17. Mares, p.151.
18. Cited in 'Despair Permeates Detention Centre', *Reuters*, 24 May 2001.

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Exile

Walter Kaufmann

I looked and saw them where they stood against those ridges red as blood, looked and saw them lessen and be lost in spinifex and sand. There, we were carried northward while my vision stayed and shared exile with those men whom, I believed, the blood-deep desert had received.

Roland Robinson: *Tumult of the Swans*

STEFAN HERMANN TURNED his head and looked hard at the burly British sergeant from the Royal Norfolk Regiment. For an instant their glances locked and there was no mistaking the hatred in the boy's eyes.

– Come on, the sergeant said in a heavy accent. Git going. The boy hesitated. The sergeant raised his rifle and shoved him forward with the butt.

– Break *my* toes too, said the boy. Here – and he held out a foot which was protected only by a rubber sole cut from an old car tyre.

– Git, the sergeant shouted again. Move; and he banged his rifle on the ground.

– You would not dare, said Stefan in halting English. It is not dark *now*. But his words were lost to the sergeant for someone had protectively seized Stefan by the arm and dragged him to the gangway that led from C deck to the wharf below.

Not many yards away two British officers were aloofly watching the disembarkation of two thousand internees who had been their charges throughout a long and hazardous voyage. This was the year 1940 – war time: the Atlantic and Pacific were mined and British vessels were threatened constantly from the sky and the sea. The internees were a motley, tatterdemalion bunch of men about whom it did not pay to trouble one's head. The officers knew that almost all of them were fugitives from Hitler; but if it had been decided to intern them and send them to Australia, then that was as it should be. If necessary they would pass their charges off to newspaper reporters as German prisoners; and then forget them.

One by one the internees emerged like moles from the bowels of the ship, blinked in the unaccustomed sunlight and filed slowly along C deck and down the gangway between a cordon of armed soldiers. The men looked straight ahead, barely allowing themselves a sideways glance at the new shores upon which they were soon to set their feet. Few of them carried more than bundles containing the barest necessities; for whatever possessions they had brought onto the prison ship had been either looted or tossed overboard by their guards.

The callings of their former lives ranged from carpenter to fashion designer, from farmer to surgeon, hotel waiter to rentier, student to political functionary; but these distinctions were barely apparent now. They were all internees, the flotsam and jetsam of Europe, wearing odd pieces of British army issue and such remnants of civilian attire as had withstood their spartan journey.

Stefan Hermann jumped off the gangway onto the wharf. A gentle spring wind blew from the sea and ruffled his dark hair. Too brilliantly the sun was shining across the waters casting quivering reflections onto timber planks. Behind the wharf-sheds, now hazy against the sunlight, arched a bridge across the harbour, beautiful and magnificent to him; a

bridge with graceful girders between which the roofs of Sydney's bayside villas were reflected brilliantly.

He quickly crossed the rails toward the prison train. There was nothing to encumber him, for he carried not even a bundle. His baggy trousers, clearly too wide for his slim waist, were held in place by a string, and his army flannel shirt was collarless. A woman's scarf of a woollen texture was twined about his neck – it was a garment worn at one time by his mother, from whom he was now separated not only by Australian troops in slouch hats and ill-fitting tunics, but also by a vast expanse of ocean and the barriers of war.

He boarded the prison train in the wake of his mates and gazed sullenly through a window secured with bolts from the inside. At regular intervals there passed the top of a slouch hat and the muzzle of a rifle over a broad shoulder. But the soldiers, the prison ship berthed nearby, the general commotion on the wharf claimed none of his attention. Conscious of his bare feet, he was craving the possession of a pair of army boots, at that moment paramount to everything including the arrival on a new continent.

The sun began to sink behind the sheds. A whistle sounded. Buffers clanked. The carriages jerked, then rumbled off the wharf and through the city which was losing its lustre. The train sped past backyards where washing flapped amid swirling smoke and children gazed from windows of grimy cottages. Soon there were fewer dwelling places; and then in less than an hour they travelled through open country with fields and trees, knotty and gnarled, and dusty bushes darkening with the fall of night.

Stefan Hermann did not speak. Only a few men about him attempted to voice their new impressions. The carriages swayed and the wheels rumbled monotonously. The soldiers at each exit leaned heavily on their rifles, their feet wide apart, their tunics open at their throats, hats pushed back, stubs of cigarettes stuck in the corners of their mouths. Silently they scrutinised their charges, who seemed badly fed and for the most part surprisingly young and harmless looking. If these were men of Hitler's army the war would be over in a month, they reckoned.

The soldier nearest Stefan, a tall scrawny man in his fifties with a bony face and sparse, wiry eyebrows sat down and stretched his legs while he held his rifle carelessly like a stick. At length he asked in a slow drawl: – Where'd they catch yer, mate?

The boy started and shrugged his shoulders. It was the first time since his internment that anyone in uniform had attempted to speak to him.

– Talk Australian?

– English? Stefan asked. Yes, a little.

– Well, where did yer get nabbed? The guard's grey eyes blinked impatiently. The boy shook his head.

– All right, never mind. You one of Hitler's mob?

– No, said Stefan emphatically. I am a Jew.

– Ah yeah, said the guard somewhat surprised. And what about yer cobbers?

– Same, said Stefan Hermann, not knowing what cobbers meant, but guessing that it referred to the other internees.

– What the hell youse all doing here then? asked the guard. No point in locking you up. Had the idea you was all prisoners of war.

His eyes and voice became sympathetic as he continued his inquiry. He learned that Stefan was sixteen years of age and came from Germany where his parents were still living. He knew what this meant – *Jews under Hitler*, and in an effort to be friendly he told of a Jew he had met in Sydney, a dental mechanic who had made him a set of artificial teeth which he exhibited without embarrassment.

– First-class job, he said. Clever bloke that Jew in Sydney. Tough luck us lockin' you up here and your own people sufferin' under Hitler, this day p'rhaps.

He lapsed into silence and reflected for a minute or two. Then he rose abruptly and shouted across the carriage to the other guard: – They're no Huns – they're all Jews, refugees like. Open the bloody windows down your end, Danny. They're not going to make a break for it.

With that he proceeded to knock down with the butt of his rifle the special bolts that held the windows up. The internees looked about amazedly as he walked down the passage brandishing his weapon and making a lot of noise opening windows in defi-

ance of all rules and regulations. The night air streamed in bracingly. The two Australians grinned at the consternation they were causing and threw their rifles on the luggage racks. Then they squatted and rolled cigarettes for themselves, not failing to offer their pouches to the men about them of whom many were craving tobacco like starving men craved food. The atmosphere grew perceptibly jollier and the division between guards and prisoners diminished with every mile.

At length the guard named Danny asked Stefan how the *Pommies* had treated him. The boy looked up questioningly.

– You know, the guards on the ship, Danny explained.

– Ah . . . not good, said Stefan pointing to a man across from him, whose foot was in plaster. One of their sergeants, we call him Lion Hunter, broke his toes.

Danny spat disgustedly.

– Never known a Pommy that was any good yet, he said with emphasis.

– Cut it out, said his mate. Don't go puttin' ideas like that in their heads. There's a war on, you know, and it ain't agin the Pommies.

– Sure, sure, I know, placated Danny, tapping the man with the broken toe good-naturedly on the shoulder. You'll be all right here, son. Great country this. Best in the world, Australia.

It seemed that the others were beginning to agree with him, for they nodded and made room for him to sit down among them. Danny put his huge feet on the seat opposite, and eventually his slouch hat slipped over his eyes. His mate, equally amiable now, produced a pack of playing cards, gathered partners with words and signs, spread his greatcoat over a case and settled down for a game.

THE EMPTY DAWN spread over a vast and silent land, barren and unchanging, as inland and further inland the train conveyed its cargo of strangers. Gradually the light spread across the scarred and brittle plain. And as the sun rose into a cloudless sky two kangaroos could be seen bounding alongside the moving train, their thick tails beating the red soil with each leap. Then they disappeared amid dry, yellow, swaying grass leaving only a solitary gum tree here and there to break the vast sameness of the land. Large black birds sat motionless in bare branches, and the country did not change. Posts of an endless wire fence flashed past. The dew had already dried on the dusty bushes.

Toward noon they arrived at their destination, weary with travel. The singeing sun had reached its summit and the ground outside reflected unsparingly the heat and the brightness that engulfed them like a burning blanket. They stood beside the railway station, which seemed to be in a desert – a long, low building with an overlapping roof casting deep shadows: Two thousand men who had never seen such a country in their lives.

– Sure . . . sure, one step from hell this, one step from hell, hot and dusty, Danny announced, wiping his neck with a khaki handkerchief. But you'll get used to her – in time.

The men pressed into the shade and kept silent. Slowly the empty train pulled out, revealing mounted Australian soldiers in slouch hats who controlled their horses with the nonchalant ease of men accustomed to the saddle. Holding their rifles like Red Indians they rode up and down the railway line surveying the long column of internees, who were beginning to move into some sort of formation.

An officer, shirt sleeves rolled up over sinewy arms, shouted an order at one end of the station and the men on horseback answered with careless drawls, Right-o, Captain. Then they gave their horses the heel and dispersed in four directions.

A sergeant, his face burnt the colour of earth, shouted the order to march. His horse pranced out onto a road that led towards a township which looked like a mirage in the distance.

The column of two thousand men stirred and began to move slowly along the oven-hot road, guarded on all flanks by soldiers on horseback. The guards from the train had mounted a truck that rolled on ahead amid a cloud of dust. Four miles the men marched, slowly and with only a semblance of order.

No-one harassed them. The horses moved at a walk, stamped and snorted and their hides glistened as if polished. The column skirted the township, struggling through a cloud of powdery dust.

They reached the camp almost an hour after they had first sighted it. On a rise four watch-towers could be distinguished, then the barbed wire fences. On they marched and nothing in this wild, strange, barren emptiness seemed real. Only the camp, that large fenced-in area dotted with army huts, gained reality as it grew closer.

And then behind the last of their column three barbed wire gates closed slowly. Outside, in the garrison, the soldiers led their horses away. A dog began barking as a bugle sounded. Inside the roll was called by the sergeant with the tanned face. He counted them by stepping swiftly along their flank, two men for every step. One more, one less, what matter; none would be missing – for where in this desert could they go? The captain read out the camp orders in a voice that lost itself over the vast parade ground and in the pulsating heat. Few grasped his meaning.

Somewhere, inconspicuous among the two thousand, stood Stefan Hermann. He was not listening to what the Australian captain was trying to explain. He was watching a hawk circling in the blue sky high above the camp. The hawk circled twice, then swooped in the direction of a gnarled tree and vanished from sight.

The bird's freedom impressed itself on Stefan, poignantly.

September

the night
calm flat Gulf

lazy break
of wave

a rattle
of beer bottles

as spring
shifts its weight

Rory Harris

Wattle at sunset

now the purple evening
dusts the glowing wattle tree
as elfin children cry your name
to lure you away.

from the edge of enchantment
he spies on your indifferent sway,
the pneumatic valley of your spine.

brittle leaves crack beneath your feet,
the crush of cooling air.

the crow who guards the entrance
warns you with his long sour cry,
while a universe of wattle smoulders
in the breath of a dying sun.

Rae Desmond Jones

Karen Throssell

Memorial to Ric Throssell

Katharine's Place, 28 November 2000

This is a transcript of Karen Throssell's speech in memory of her father, Ric Throssell, delivered at the Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre at 'Greenmount', outside Perth. 'Greenmount' was Prichard's home for many years.

THIS PLACE IS so familiar to me. For many years of my life it was like a second home. In fact I loved it so much, the house I bought in Warrandyte (on two acres of bush outside Melbourne) has been dubbed by my friends who know – 'Karen's Greenmount'.

When I was young, most years our family would travel across the Nullarbor from Canberra and spend a few weeks here. In the last few years of Katharine's life she flew me over in the Uni. holidays (I saw myself very proudly as her 'secretary', typing endless individual thank-you letters in response to her formidable fan mail).

Then it was about thirty-five years after her death that I returned to what was no longer my grandmother's house but 'Katharine's Place'.

But images of Greenmount have been imprinted on my memory: the trellis over the courtyard festooned with currants in the summer, the wide verandahs where we'd sit in the evening waiting for the 'Fremantle doctor', the tangled plumbago on the way to Katharine's writing shack, and the shack itself with the huge stone fireplace, the possum skin rug draped over the 'Hamlet couch' and the huge cupboards full of papers – each shelf labelled in pencil on its edge.

It was my last memory of being here as a 'tourist' that gave me the theme of this Tribute to Ric Throssell. I was here then, for another KSP Memorial lecture, talking to some of the eager young writers who were attending the readings, looking through the shack where the famous writer created her masterpieces. One of these young people said to me after expounding on what a wonderful writer KSP was:

"Wasn't she a bit of a red?"

I was quite shocked that someone who claimed to know her writing did not understand that her politics formed the core of not only her writing but of her very being. It was of course something that led the 'experts' to say it was either the greatest strength or the greatest weakness of her writing. Nevertheless most agree it is vital to gain a true understanding of her work.

In this and in many other ways Ric Throssell, my father, was very much his mother's son. Not that he was ever in the Communist party – he only joined the Labor party briefly when Gough was elected. His last major work, 'Tomorrow' reflects his reluctant disillusion with the models so fiercely defended by Katharine.

But like his mother he had a huge commitment to social justice in general and the peace movement in particular, a belief that we are on this earth to 'make a difference'. His life too reflected her belief that the personal is political and that every action must be congruent with your values. And like Katharine I'm sure that he would want to be remembered for his 'being' – his ideas and values – as well as his 'doing' – his more tangible achievements.

As a wonderful synthesis of this aspect of Dad, I would like to read a poem dedicated to him by his very dear friend and mine, Canberra poet Anne Edgeworth.

Crusader

His life was stretched between the two
who gave him life – his father, young hero, who ran
up the bellowing hill to silence an enemy gun,
in peace, found no strength left for living.

The boy grew
tall as his hero father, filled
with fierce compassion, drawn as a child
from his small, gifted, passionate
mother, who embraced this century's faith,
privileged, championed the powerless till her death,
the vision in her head inviolate,
undimmed by tyrants and time-servers who trod
peoples under in the name of the new God.

His father's war having come round again
the son marched into its mills.
Anger and pity wracked
him for the unnumbered victims that choked
those furnaces.
After, with lifelong passion
he ran against all guns, though running found
no faith like hers to ease steep, stony ground.

Drawn to the ritual discipline of the stage,
its microcosm of the confused world's
public and private battlefields,
there he transformed his lasting love and rage
through the gift of words, gift she had handed on –
"We must create a Dreaming of our own
if we're to change the world," he said and sought
companions who might realise this dream,
but found himself lone runner ahead of them.

Unlike her, his long crusade shadowed by doubt
(Can men leave old ways, live in peace, share?)
yet writes on, strongly shrugging off despair.

When I was invited to give this talk, as well as being deeply honoured I was also a bit overwhelmed. There are many other people who are more expert than I on all the different facets (and there are many of them) of Dad's life. But I guess what I can do is add some personal embellishments to the public person you may know, to fill this picture out with some glimpses of RPT the private man and particularly because of where I am – to trace the strong links that span four generations of Throssells. (Four because I will be reading an excerpt from a tribute to Dad written by my then seventeen-year-old daughter Katharine.)

Dad was a man of many parts – "a rare multi-talented person" as one of the speakers at his funeral said. I've grouped these public aspects into four sections – fairly artificially, because they are so intertwined – The Creator, The Activist, The Statesman, and The Scapegoat.

The Creator

Don Batchelor from QUT has written a very comprehensive PhD on the contribution of RPT to Australian theatre as a playwright, a director and an actor. Speakers at the funeral spoke of his "meticulous, exacting and ruthless directing", and his "towering, magnificent [acting] performances". A letter from Manning Clarke to *The Canberra Times* described Dad's interpretation of King Lear as "The finest performance I'd ever seen and that is including in comparison with the 'great English actors'."

What I can tell you about is a childhood full of rehearsals in the old Riverside huts in Canberra that formed the original 'Repertory' theatre. I knew that I came from a weird kind of family. When my friends would talk about what their parents did on the weekend – the pub and the footy – all mine did was go to rehearsals, or disappear for hours into the shack. (Yes, we had one of them at home too.) I was proud however of the wild after-show parties at our house, the hearing of lines and Dad's immersion into each of his characters. I have all sorts of memories associated with different productions. I can remember having to be escorted from the theatre weeping hysterically when as Macbeth, they brought in my Dad's head on a plate. I also recall gasping with horror at the sight of him with his shirt off digging in the rose garden on a Saturday afternoon, still sporting the very realistic burn scars on his arms and back for his role as the nuclear war victim in his play *The*

day before tomorrow. (The 'burns' stayed there from the Friday night through to the Saturday night performance.) I remember also helping Mum curl his especially grown hair into a 'page-boy' for his part as Christopher Fry in *The Lady's not for burning* and chuckling at the sight of the long-haired public servant going off in his suit and tie on a Monday (pretty radical in the fifties!).

As you may know, he moved from writing plays to novels, first biography (*Wild Weeds and Windflowers)* and then to probably his best known work – his autobiography, *My Father's Son* which was shortlisted for the Banjo Award.

When he moved to writing fiction, I must admit I was anxious – believing that the writing of fiction and non-fiction involve very different skills. Dad was such a perfectionist with his biography, endlessly researching, poring over detail, drafting and re-drafting. I wondered whether these skills would translate into a different genre. But I think they did – especially with his last two novels – *Tomorrow* and *Jackpot.*

Possibly they worked more for me because they were more like Dad than his earlier pieces – there was more social comment, more questioning of the values of the world we live in. (See, I'm my father's daughter too.)

The Activist

WHILST NOT being a pacifist (he always said he'd kill in defense of his loved ones and he did serve as a soldier in New Guinea in the Second World War) he was a staunch activist and campaigner for the peace movement with many of his plays espousing this theme: *For Valour,* based on the life of his father, VC winner Captain Hugo Throssell; *Valley of the Shadows,* about the hysterical blindness of an Australian soldier as a symbol of the world closing its eyes to the drift towards war; and *Legend,* a Cold War love story with an anti-war message. Particularly important was *The Day before Tomorrow.* An anti-nuclear play way before its time, it was chosen to be performed at the Olympic village in 1956. I remember driving down from Canberra for the play. We all got free tickets to the Olympics, but such was my unconventional family I think they only went to the fencing. (That and archery were Dad's only sporting interests, I suppose because they were connected to his passion for Shakespeare.)

His fellow peace activists in People for Nuclear Disarmament and Writers against Nuclear Arms are able to provide more detail about his activism. And they did at the funeral – talking about not only his ready availability to give talks at a range of different venues (from schools to the ADFA), but also his use of his considerable diplomatic skills, fundraising and organising. They were particularly impressed with his willingness to get his hands dirty – trooping tirelessly around to bookshops and libraries, quite unlike those who don't like to get out of the limelight.

Many of you may have heard, too, of the dramatic sale of his father's VC to raise money for the peace movement. Taking as a cue Hugo's profound disillusionment with war after his return from Gallipoli, Dad (in asking us kids whether we minded losing our 'inheritance') said that Hugo would have approved of using the medal he won to promote the message of peace. He used the money (ironically from the RSL who bought the medal) to make a film called *The Pursuit of Happiness* – a fantastic little film directed by Martha Ansara. Unfortunately it was shown only to the converted in arthouse cinemas. However, Dad made sure that the book that was written to accompany the film got into schools – in Canberra he visited schools to personally convince them that they needed it in their libraries – so maybe his peace message has gone a bit further.

The Statesman

UNTIL RECENTLY Dad's paid work was much more unfamiliar territory to me. When I was growing up he just disappeared every morning in his suit and did what fathers (and not mothers) did. At this time he was playing an important role as Head of the International Training Branch of the Department of External Affairs. His colleague at the time, Greg O'Reardon has praised his "distinguished contribution to Australia's foreign aid program" and the fact that he converted a minor extension of Australian foreign policy into "Australia's most extensive, concrete and beneficial international relations program ever". Later Dad talked to me about his early role with Doc Evatt and the United Nations. This may have been the beginning of his peace activism, notwithstanding his knowledge of his father's views after the war. In *My Father's Son,* he talks about "relishing his work, convinced that the United Nations could bring peace and security to the world". He was a strong supporter of the role of the UN as a peacekeeper. In fact he played an important role in the ending of the Dutch 'police action' in Indonesia

with the adoption of the Australian resolution to the Security Council of the UN that it should take mandatory action to end the fighting between the Dutch and the Indonesians. He says in *My Father's Son*, "I felt as though I had made some contribution to peace in our part of the world".

Although his idealism about the role that the UN could play did dim somewhat over the years, he was still arguing just before he died that it should have been the United Nations rather than NATO who intervened in Kosovo.

The Scapegoat

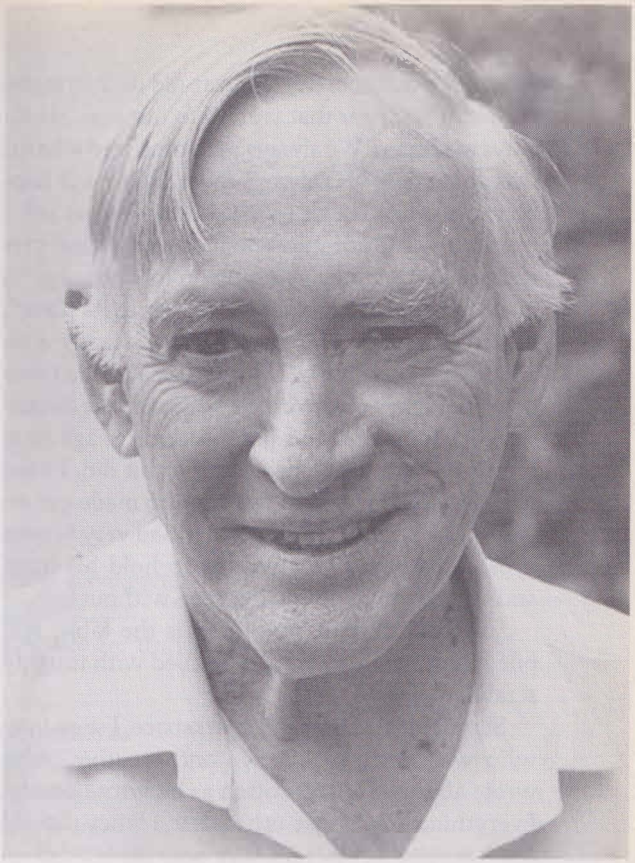
THE OTHER ROLE he played that most of you will be aware of is that of ASIO's most favourite innocent victim. This has been written about extensively, not least by his own hand. The heading of the chapter in *My Father's Son* tells it all – 'The man who had a mother'.

I can't add to this detail but I can illustrate the pervasiveness of this lifetime of persecution as it affected our family – the school teacher who asked whether I was going to Russia when I was going away for holidays; the dentist and the greengrocer who refused to treat or serve us because they didn't deal with 'commos'; the way I always seemed to be singled out by the police in anti-Vietnam demonstrations; and the fact that I was forbidden to talk about my role as the secretary of the ANU anti-Vietnam war campaign over the phone, in case 'they' were listening.

Particularly tragic is the total lack of respite over my entire lifetime and clearly a large portion of Dad's.

Thanks to the efforts of Des Ball in his anachronistic work *Reds* deciding that the 'commo can' could still do with a kick even in the nineties, Dad was writing passionate letters defending not only himself but Katharine to *The Age* and his bête noire *The Courier Mail* right up until his death. His bitter comment about the continuation of unfounded accusations against Katharine after her death was that the old McCarthyist headline of 'Reds under the Bed' had now been replaced by 'Dead Reds under the Bed'.

Ironically, two weeks after *his* death *The Age* ran an article about the new head of ASIO with a gratuitous mention of the "suicide" of the "alleged Russian spy" Ric Throssell. They refused to print my outraged letter in which I pointed out that not only had The Petrov Royal Commission cleared him in 1955 with no charges ever having been brought against him, but that the recent release of the 1945 Venona



Portrait of Ric Throssell 1991, *photograph: Virginia Wallace-Crabbe. By permission of the National Library of Australia.*

Decrypts confirmed that the Russians had never had any interest in him or his mother. Friends suggested that he had good grounds to seek compensation after thirty years of illegal and unwarranted denial of normal career advancement.

So much for the private view of the public man. To introduce Ric Throssell as private man – as father, husband and grandfather – I would like to read a shortened version of a piece written in June 1999 by my daughter Katie (Katharine) Throssell.

The Old King

THE OLD KING is gone. The house is empty and quiet, timeless without the regulation of his footfall.

I stand alone in emptiness, yet surrounded by things. He is gone, but he is everywhere. In the silver he polished, in the cufflinks on the dresser, in the serviette ring engraved with 'Ric'.

He may as well be outside, picking figs or cherries in the garden. I can remember us picking strawberries and raspberries, "lifting the skirts of the

plants". I remember my six-year-old delight at the mountain of sugar that went into our jam. He always made jam. We always had some, and when it was gone there was always more. What will happen now when we scrape the bottom of the jar?

In his workroom the smell of leather and varnish, each tool hung carefully on its own peg. "A place for everything and everything in its place", he had a creed for every occasion, ever ready with a lesson on something. Even as a small child I was not spared these lectures. He believed that discussion of the morality of one's actions at age four, would make a difference – perhaps it did. I used to hate these talks, and the way he made me always look at him in the eyes. He had very brown eyes. Today I'd give anything to hold his hand and talk of things, done and seen without him.

The best thing in this room is the table, still piled high with papers, scraps filled with roughly scrawled ideas.

Surveying his table, his workspace, I see a man who was both productive and creative, who wrote about politics as often as he wrote poetry. Everything here is just as he left it. I fancy that if I don't disturb anything, I may hear his footfall up the path, and see him in the doorway, with his brown eyes and his crooked smile.

I pick up a scrap from the table. It reads "pojalsta – please, spasibo – thank you", remnants from our Russian lessons. He was fluent, and all I can say is 'please' and 'thank you'.

There must be a million books on these shelves, on everything from politics to poetry, science to Shakespeare. This is how I remember him, as the learned man. The man to come to for help with literature, drama, or creative writing. The man for inspiration and interpretation.

He baked me rock cakes the day he died. There are two left – no-one wanted to eat them so they are very hard. I hold one in my hand, as he did yesterday. I eat it and cry, salt mingled with sugar. My teeth hurt but I keep eating until there is nothing left, then I cry more.

My grandfather the writer, the actor, the man who loved making jam and rock cakes. King of this house, once King of my world. Now gone.

OUT OF SO MUCH, the three elements of Dad's private life that I picked to share with you (reflecting my biases) are his feminism, his nationalism and his devotion to his family.

Whilst feminism was one area that we did have some spectacular blues about (especially in my more strident phases) in my mellow middle age I can appreciate just how radical Dad's sharing of domestic burdens and belief in sexual equality was. Not many men in the late forties can boast that as well as washing the nappies and doing the night shifts with crying babies, they helped make their first born's pilchers as well as 'Ric and Dodie look alike' rag dolls. (He also made Karen and Robin dolls in the late eighties for my second daughter Briony.) Through all of our early years he cooked tea for us every Saturday, introducing us to rice and pasta as a welcome change from the meat and three veg.

Like Katharine he was a true nationalist (although he eschewed chauvinism), loving the bush and teaching us about its magic from a very early age. He was a constant supporter of Australian arts in the years of the cultural cringe to both Mother England (Enid Blyton and Beatrix Potter were banned in our household) and later to Uncle Sam. His one play to be produced on television, *Dr Homer Speaks* was about a pied piper character who lures the innocent children of Australia into the chasm of American popular culture – a reflection of his horror at my Americanised adolescence.

Although Dad was not without his faults, he was a wonderful father – my mentor and source of inspiration. He was always there to support and advise on the most extraordinary range of subjects – from negotiating tactics when I was working as a union official, to improving the flow of a piece of writing – Dad where are you? – to how to make your hot cross buns rise. He and Mum were always there for us – and we three offspring did provide probably more than the usual share of challenges.

Some of his writing was for us too: *South Seagold Bay*, a children's play about the place where we spent our summer holidays; *The Other Rose* (a story written for my daughter Katharine (with illustrations by my sister Keed); and *Jackpot* (written as a cautionary tale about my late partner's gambling addiction). I am currently working with a scriptwriter to make it into a film.

No tribute to Dad would be complete without mentioning our beloved mother Dodie – his 'other half' – a term I would normally never use, but in their case it was in fact apt. Dad was a totally devoted husband and a true romantic. Mum was his advisor, his muse, his calm centre, his loyal comrade and the love of his life – and he knew he couldn't live without her.

I would like to finish by reading a poem I wrote for their joint funeral service in April 1999. I wrote it to explain to those who were angry with him on our behalf for what they saw as his suicide and which we saw and supported as euthanasia.

But please, no Amen

Their's was a classic love
a fairy tale romance
the sort of thing
that cynics would assign
to fiction

So close were they
two halves
that together were complete
A perfect symmetry
of light and dark
of Yin and Yang

But all their lives they knew
that each perfect tear
if left to weep alone
would surely die
It seems you need
two eyes to cry

And that very interweaving
enriched we children so –
our lives a synthesis (not perfect) of
strong and gentle,
words and silence,
thought and action

But their greatest gift
that all-embracing love
which wove its spell around us
forever made us whole

And now that they have gone
our lives are so much less
and whilst our hearts are truly breaking
at our loss

Our grief is for ourselves
and not for them
knowing they'd no use
for Life for living's sake

Preferring not the coerced beat
of a tired heart
Rather a life well-lived
a difference made
and choosing when to go

And as for all their lives
they shun convention still
Those vows that held them true for all those years
they quietly defied

Refused that final dictum
'Till death us do part'
and stayed together
Forever and ever

But please, no Amen

Karen Throssell
April 1999

Susan Bradley Smith

Girl meets tractor

Socialist desire in Katharine Susannah Prichard's suffrage plays

ON BOARD SHIP to England from America in 1915, Australian suffragette and writer Miles Franklin wrote an angry letter to a friend. She had just heard the distressing news that the American voting returns had come in against women's suffrage, and she could find no-one interested enough in this tragedy to talk to or answer any of her questions. "When there are *really* splendid and important male performances like rape and murder, devastation and ruin to be attended to," Franklin wrote facetiously, "the silly woman business of making the world better and more democratic, of course, is too trivial to notice."[1] Compared to the enormity of events experienced during the First World War, female suffrage may have seemed trivial. For women like Miles Franklin and fellow Australian writer and activist Katharine Susannah Prichard, however, it was anything but. The vote symbolised the possibilities for significant and magnificent change, and their agitation for the vote was charged by these expectations. Such energy meant that political, professional, enfranchised, and empowered women like Prichard and Franklin were forces to be reckoned with during the suffrage era. On the world stage, their dramas mapped out the emerging socialist desires of many feminists of the time, revealing peculiarly Australian contours.

This article explores the business of Australian suffrage feminists who fought for emancipation through their involvement in the theatre. Socialist desire as a defining feature of Australian suffrage drama has been examined elsewhere,[2] but this exploration is intent on elaborating those ideas through the particular example of Prichard's early plays. As authentic epics of feminist emancipation and its socialist possibilities, they are examined here as examples which illuminate both Australian and international theatre and suffrage history. Theatre history is the most recent contribution to suffrage historiography and as such offers fresh perspectives on diverse areas, including ideas of citizenship as they were formulated at the beginning of the twentieth century. The socialist configuration of the new Australian nation as expressed in the desires of certain intellectuals and artists can be read clearly in Prichard's suffrage plays. In looking at these plays I'm interested in what defines political theatre, and what in particular distinguishes early Australian feminist theatre, and what all this might possibly reveal about the ways we imagined ourselves as Australians almost a century ago.

Prichard's socialist desire was informed by historical circumstances that aroused a passion not so easily fathomed at this comparatively sterile beginning of a new century. These days, when it is less usual to be aroused by world leaders let alone 'revolutionary' ideas, it may be hard to recognise the passion that underpinned Prichard and her contemporaries' work, but locating that passion is a useful place to start from in order to enter Prichard's world. So first, a brief look at suffrage theatre and history and Prichard's evolving political consciousness and professional development before examining some of her plays.

AUSTRALIAN FEMINIST playwrights were enfranchised women living in a world where women were still largely disenfranchised. For that reason alone it is worth contrasting the dates when suffrage was won, though far more comprehensive accounts are available elsewhere.[3] Women in New Zealand achieved the vote in 1893, in Australia in 1902, in England in 1918, and in the United States in 1920, but these dates are not revealing in themselves about the distinguishing features of the struggle as it occurred in each country. Women's winning of not only the vote but the right to stand for Parliament in South Australia in 1894 was a world first. In the

American context, although women had been voting under certain circumstances in various states, and as early as 1776 in New Jersey (a right that was later revoked), women did not vote across the United States until 1920. The situation in the United Kingdom was even more complex, with only married women, women householders, and women graduates over thirty years of age eligible to vote in 1918. Full suffrage was not gained in England until 1928.

The constitutional differences, as well as the cultural variables such as religion and particular circumstances – the anti-slavery movement in America for example – which heightened feminist struggles in individual nations, should not distract from the common feminist visions shared by the suffrage movement as a whole. It was those common visions – an international feminism – that ultimately characterised the suffrage era. Australian feminists, particularly expatriates, constantly defined themselves as suffragists concerned with international feminist developments that extended beyond national boundaries, demonstrated by their commitment to the cause long after the vote had been won at home.

Since continuity and change within the feminist movement of this time happened before, during and after the vote in various countries, the citing of the dates when suffrage was won offers little more than a series of artificial stop points. Often it was when the franchise was won and the suffrage battle concluded that the real feminist battles began. If the vote was a symbol then citizenship was a reality – one that continued to disappoint women and anger feminists with its results. Australian women, enfranchised 'early', were more aware of this than their American or British sisters, and this political awareness informed both the writing of Australian feminists and the way in which they conducted themselves as expatriates. For the doubly politicised like Prichard, socialism informed her feminism and writing and even further expanded her sense of international allegiance with those fighting for a better world.

THEATRE HISTORIAN Sheila Stowell describes suffrage drama in the English context as a species of 'agitprop' drama that thrived from 1908 to 1914.[4] Despite problems of categorisation which Stowell's definition presents, her observations are illuminating. For example, she acknowledges the diverse character of suffrage drama, which did not only concern itself with the vote. She argues that suffrage drama was a kind of theatre that presented "obvious arguments for female enfranchisement" but that it also of course offered:

> plays that dealt with more generalised portrayals of women's experience. These included both representations of women's continuing victimisation within the existing social and political system . . . and celebratory renderings of current and potential accomplishments.[5]

The ideals of suffrage theatre were made possible in England by two important bodies: the Women Writers' Suffrage League (WWSL), formed in 1908; and the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL), which also held its first public meeting in 1908. The AFL recognised the marketing power of suffrage theatre and opened a play department under the direction of Australian actor and playwright Inez Bensusan who oversaw the writing, collection and publication of suffrage drama. Further, Edy Craig founded the Pioneer Players in London in 1911; they aimed to "present serious and controversial issues in an entertaining way [hoping] to make audiences entertain ideas they might otherwise dismiss".[6] Under these favourable conditions, women playwrights in England were able to use the public forum of drama as a feminist point of entry into the political debates of the period.

Australian suffrage theatre, while influenced by overseas developments in women's theatre, was not overwhelmed by that influence. In a 1907 article entitled 'Feminism and Theatre', a male critic commented that, having won the vote: "Woman is confidently expected to exert an ennobling and refining influence in politics." He further pondered: "Can we look with confidence for a new excellence in the drama when woman's tastes and inclinations have fully asserted themselves?"[7] A belated answer to that question, offered in this cursory overview, argues for the unique circumstances of both Australian suffrage and theatre history. Many critical issues inform suffrage theatre history including the debate about realism as a suitable dramatic form for the expression of feminism, the impact of international suffrage theatre on tour in Australia, and the significance of feminist theatrical activities in schools and universities. There are continuing debates about the worthiness of (white) suffrage sentiments representing a monolithic feminism as constructed in some postcolonial theorisations. They all demand attention that is not feasible here. Instead, Prichard's plays

Brigade KGK, 1931, Female delegate, stand to the fore! *Publisher: Ogiz-Izogiz, Moscow/Leningrad http://www.iisg.nl/exhibitions/chairman/sov25.html*

are explored as examples of Australian suffrage theatre, characterised by its internationalism, its advanced expressions of post-suffrage feminisms, and its expatriatism, revealing a desire to both heal and be healed by the larger world.

BORN AT THE HEIGHT of a tropical hurricane in Fiji in 1883, Prichard later wanted to attend Melbourne University but was unable to do so because her mother's ill health caused her to miss a university bursary. Instead, after a stint as a governess, she pursued a career in journalism, while simultaneously forging a life as a writer. Prichard has earned respect and some fame as an Australian writer. She is most recognised as a novelist, but is also known as a dramatist for her 1927 award winning play *Brumby Innes*.[8] Prichard was in fact a prolific writer of plays – and not only in the 1930s and later when most of them were staged.[9] Ric Throssell, Prichard's son, maintains that even though "she saw drama as a minor part of her lifelong literary output", she admitted that the theatre was her first love, and claimed that she would rather have written for the theatre if only it had offered a livelihood.[10] She participated in some early Australian drama evenings in Melbourne and had her work performed by the AFL whilst working in London from 1912 to 1915. On 17 July 1911, Prichard attended a suffrage rally in London, marching in the Australian contingent. She described the situation in the Melbourne *Herald* as a "flush of dawn in the sky", and partially attributed its success to an enfranchised Australia which she saw as having "something to do with the set of the tide here in the favour of womanhood suffrage".[11] It was in this atmosphere that Prichard wrote her suffrage plays.

London was also Prichard's first serious encounter with grim poverty. This exposure hardened her socialist ideals, and resulted in some sharply focused dramatic writing. For example, 'A Miracle in the Street of Refugees', written in 1910 and set in London's Soho, deals with this angst in a drama about migrants and slum life. However, it was the dramatic writing which dealt more closely with the concerns of British feminists of the time that brought her most luck and acclaim as a playwright.[12] Probably through her initial association with other women's political organisations, Prichard was introduced to the AFL, and met Inez Bensusan who at this time ran the play department and was responsible for its programming. As a result, at least two of Prichard's plays were performed by the AFL, 'Her Place', in 1913, and 'For Instance', in 1914 (of which no script has survived). 'The Burglar' was also written whilst Prichard was in London during her first stay there in 1908,[13] but was not performed in Australia until 1910 at the first Australian Drama Night held in Melbourne and produced by William Moore. These three examples from her larger body of early dramatic writing form the basis of this examination.

When Prichard went to the first rehearsals of 'The Burglar', she found that Bill Moore had – to her horror – changed all the entries and exits, and was having production problems: "He tore his hair out and said it wouldn't work and he didn't know what he was going to do with this play, it just wouldn't work. So I said, very well, I'll produce it myself, and I did".[14] Prichard took over rehearsals, organising everything from casting to set production. She felt closely attached to the play, originally having intended it to be a lengthier three-act piece "working out the theory of life experience when Sally [a character] says 'I want to live in love with the whole world' . . . it was not finished because there seemed no possibility of the play ever being made use of in Australia – then".[15]

Prichard was referring to the socialist theme of her play, which points the finger at elitism and wealth, and champions the working-class burglar, Bill, who is trying to make a better life for himself. The plot revolves around Bill who has been funding his education by robbing from the rich during his holidays. He is caught during the act by the 'young lady' of the house, Sally, formerly a governess and now the fiancée of a wealthy man. The two engage in a lengthy conversation, which constitutes the bulk of the play. Sally is tom between the plight of Bill and the responsibility of guarding the gems that have been entrusted to her care by her diamond merchant fiancée. She reluctantly protects the gems (read status quo) but 'guides' Bill into stealing other valuables, (her own inherited precious though less valuable jewelry), thus endorsing both his need and right. Sally's lament over her actions at the play's conclusion suggests that she feels that in protecting her fiancée's goods (read capitalism) she has betrayed both herself and Bill (the larger social fabric).

Critic Sandra Burchill reads 'The Burglar' as evident commitment of Prichard's socialism but argues that it reveals the immaturity of her politics. She sees Prichard's "commitment to socialism as a means of fighting injustice and redistributing wealth" as being "essentially romantic and sentimental",[16] and judges the actions of Sally to be benevolent and charitable in the Victorian philanthropic mode, and therefore condescending. This is a plausible reading given that Prichard does not heavily dramatise Marxist politics. For example, she does not attack the capitalist institutions that could be held responsible for this divide between rich and poor, and keeping the poor, like Bill, uneducated. As Burchill points out, in 'The Burglar' Prichard opts for a 'Robin Hood' redistribution of wealth rather than a revolutionary attack on social order: "I'm a Socialist, you see," says Sally. "I've always promised myself that if anyone who'd got less than I've got came looking for what I've got, I'd give it to him."[17] Prichard's political inquiry in the play, however, ventures beyond Sherwood Forest.

While it is evident in this play that Prichard's socialism was searching for stronger political feet to stand on, Burchill's reading is too dismissive. It neglects the main sentiment of the play, as expressed by Sally, who wants to "live in love with the whole world" and be "happy, happy in common sympathy". This may seem romantic, but it has its projection in a socialist, utopian future where all people are equal, and undivided by barriers such as money. Further, when Sally indicates that she is ashamed of 'her' wealth and encourages Bill to steal her valuables rather than raising any alarms, she demonstrates some depth of political understanding which surpasses shallow Victorian philanthropy: "One half of the world preys on the other half to hang these ice flames [diamonds] about its necks and arms". In this sense, 'The Burglar' – typical of Prichard's early dramatic writing – provides an example of Australian feminist writers' post-suffrage political concerns: that is, what are we going to do about the world, what are our responsibilities to humanity now that we can vote? Prichard has posed that question dramatically in 'The Burglar', framing it neatly within the short one-act format so typical of suffrage dramas.

In an evening's entertainment that attracted an audience of over five hundred, reviews of the play were mixed.[18] The Melbourne *Herald* said that "it was obviously a vehicle for conveying socialist principles through a dialogue between a discontented, wealthy young lady who thinks she is a socialist at heart, and a cynical burglar who is familiar with life's sordid weariness".[19] The *Sporting and Dramatic News* was also critical, saying the play was "too wordy", but adding that "its exponents hardly did it justice".[20] Another critic, writing in *Labor Calls* described 'The Burglar' as "A Playlet with a purpose". Angered by the injustice given to the script by the actors, it is his comments about an Australian audience's reception to overtly political theatre which are most revealing and reminiscent of Prichard's lament, stated earlier, that such theatre could not "be made use of" in Australia:

> If Miss Prichard does not altogether succeed, the fault may perhaps lie with the modern audience, which likes its dialogue cut into snappy snippets, and regards 'purposeful' lines with the dark brown gaze of suspicion and mistrust. "We came 'heah' for entertainment", declares the baleful gaze, "and – 'whai', what are you giving us? Sermons?" . . . Had Miss Prichard's burglar let loose a few times with his six-shooter, it might have knocked them.[21]

In mapping the development of early Australian drama and its socialist consciousness, the important thing, as one contemporary critic said, is not "Whether such plays are good or bad . . . it is the placing of them before critics [a public] which is the primary object".[22] While Prichard may not have felt that her own political desires met with the right au-

dience on this particular Melbourne night in 1910, she met with very different circumstances in London. The AFL performed 'Her Place' in 1914. This short one-act piece can be read as "an indictment of the English social system which produces 'selfish and idle women' of the upper class".[23] With six characters (four women and two men) and a running time of approximately twenty minutes, it makes an ideal curtain-raiser for a larger evening of entertainment, or – more likely – a political meeting.

Mrs Bunning, a devoted and beloved charwoman, has been accused of stealing some expensive jewelry from a house guest. It eventuates that she was covering up for her young mistress, who had borrowed the pearls without permission and subsequently lost them. All is well at the play's end, with the severely humbled accusers and doubters reveling in the dignity and loyalty of this hard-working woman who has had a long-suffering existence. In apology, the mistress takes Mrs Bunning's hands, saying: "The place of selfish and idle women like Rosalie and me, is at the feet of women like you. And your place is on a pedestal, or in a niche in an old cathedral".[24]

An interesting aspect of this play is Prichard's command of English dialects and how accents are used to depict and satirise class differences. Concerned with the treatment of servants, 'Her Place' is a very Australian, anti-elitist incrimination of class differences. This subject would have had significant impact on the AFL stage, considering their often conservative audiences were generally well used to employing servants. This championing of the working classes continues in Prichard's next play for the AFL, 'For Instance'.

Although the script of 'For Instance' no longer exists, the London suffrage journal *Votes For Women!* ran a review of the play's July 1914 performance. It was part of a larger event, a conference of 'Suffragists From Overseas' which was followed by entertainment:

> In the evening a reception was held . . . when a delightful entertainment was given under the direction of Miss Inez Bensusan by that indefatigable and generous body of professional women, The Actresses' Franchise League. It included a clever and extremely appropriate little dramatic sketch – *For Instance* – by Katharine Prichard, of which the scene was set in an Australian blouse factory, and it showed not only the better conditions of the working woman in a country where women are voters, but also the greater respect accorded to them by men.[25]

While it is difficult to be certain about what is being read here as Prichard's representation of the impact of the suffrage upon Australian masculinity, it was very likely read as an indictment of British men and their sluggish action on political issues of critical concern to women.

The above review is revealing for a number of reasons. First, Prichard was obviously held in high enough esteem to participate in such an auspicious occasion and paraded as a worthy representative of an Australian suffragette. Second, the play was set in Australia; this may well have been a first on the British stage (aside from Australian melodramas). It would be interesting to know how the Australian accents were handled, and how local references were received – especially as fellow Australian Inez Bensusan actually performed in the play.[26] As the review suggests, Prichard successfully promoted Australia as a country advanced both in the areas of women's enfranchisement and industrial relations.

Prichard returned home to Australia in 1915, her blossoming writing and dramatic career cut short, like so many others, by the war. Drusilla Modjeska argues that Prichard's decision to leave London was a voluntary one undertaken with a positive zeal: "She now had the experience she felt she needed, and the confidence . . . to return as a serious writer." She also argues that "While the war was a factor in [Prichard's] return, much more important was [her] nationalism and [her] commitment to Australian literature".[27] These were certainly reasons why Prichard stayed in Australia after her return, but other circumstances should also be taken into account. Had it not been for the war, and the concomitant reduction of options for her evolution as a writer, it is feasible to consider that she may never have left London. The AFL play department had ceased commissioning plays and the English theatre in general underwent profound change. It is significant that Prichard considered theatre to be an excellent artistic opportunity for conveying political ideals, and she had little faith in that opportunity being available in Australia: "Theatre conditions in Australia are so discouraging for a young playwright".[28] Regardless, and injudiciously perhaps considering that theatre was her 'first love', home she came – but not without having created an interesting chapter in the history of early Australian feminist theatre.

THESE LONDON EXPERIENCES reveal the socialist sentiments of a young woman. Much later, in a 1967 interview, she explained her utopian dreaming, still intact after all those passing decades: "[I write] for the purpose of influencing people in the direction of ideals that I think are important . . . to try to direct their attention to the ideas that will make for the greatest welfare of mankind; opposition to war, international co-operation for disarmament . . . to show them that if they unite they can make a different world possible".[29] Clearly, we know what Prichard's politics were but how good a playwright is she? Were her plays in any measurable way "midwives of the revolution"? It is more difficult to judge the plays themselves as dramatic pieces than it is to recognise their sociological value and their revelations of socialist desiring amongst certain Australian citizenry. And what did all this socialism do to her feminism? As Prichard scholar Cath Ellis has pointed out: "There is a generally accepted understanding that Prichard's literary career was compromised by her commitment to politics and that her work . . . is inherently flawed by a propagandist slant and didactic tenor".[30] That politics and writing are incompatible activities was an almost unrelenting stance of mainstream Australian literary criticism, so such ideas having enduring currency is little wonder. It is worth adding that her 1927 award-winning play is the work of a mature, well-practised and oft-produced playwright, perhaps largely attributable to her apprenticeship as a suffrage playwright.

Valuing recovered writing is always a tempestuous process. Many critics have dismissed these and similar examples of early women's drama as unworthy, insignificant, too 'girly' to be feminist, too 'utopian' to be politically instructive. Feminist critic Toril Moi provides a salutary warning to literary historians and critics, mocking the criteria of some feminist critics who demand that a work can only be labeled feminist if it has representations of strong, powerful women. She equates such a stance to the dictatorial demands of socialist realism as set down by the Soviet Writers' Congress, worrying that "Instead of strong, happy, tractor drivers and factory workers, we are now, presumably, to demand strong, happy *women* tractor drivers".[31] Prichard had many a problem during her life as woman, wife, mother, socialist and later communist, writer, and feminist, yet she was an extraordinary figure. It would be an unworthy act to simply promote her suffrage plays for their "strong, happy *women* tractor drivers" although I have a strong sense that Prichard's women characters could manage a tractor in any paddock, in high heels if need be. Such categorisation should not neglect the theatrical merit of these plays, nor their value as historical specimens that allow readers to ask different questions of Australian history.

WHAT THEN DOES Prichard's story contribute to Australian theatre historiography in general? What exactly did define the debate about (or push for) the development of Australian drama during this period, and who argued for and against it? We know that Louis Esson played an important role in that development. Esson used the model of Irish Literary theatre to generate a national drama that embraced the extraordinary and tried to shape it to define a national mythology. We know that Prichard was professionally involved with Esson. It is curious that Irishman James Joyce is famous for his attacks on the kind of Irish theatre Esson so admired. Joyce believed that a writer's first duty might be to insult rather than flatter national identity. Prichard demonstrably shared these sentiments, for her own suffrage theatre is intent on insulting the international vanities of the Empire, and its capitalist crimes. In doing so, she sometimes flattered Australian national identity if it meant celebrating achievements such as advanced industrial relations or female emancipation. It is important to note, however, that Prichard never unreservedly participated in mindless domestic celebrations which uncritically championed Australia, as her long devotion to Aboriginal causes and gender issues in her writing demonstrates.

A second point suggests itself here on the development of Australian theatrical traditions. In 1955 the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust was set up in order to promote and develop an indigenous drama. Hugh Hunt was in charge, and briefly to summarise the failures of this venture, it can be argued that Hunt's assimilationist policies failed to understand the operations of Australian class. His aesthetic ambitions to emulate London's Old Vic did not match the less graceful perspectives of local Australian dramatists. As Katharine Brisbane has pointed out, in comparison to the Irish playwrights with whom Hunt was familiar (and wrongly equated with Australian dramatists), Australian playwrights "failed to see the romance of poverty".[32] Prichard had anticipated this tradition almost half a century earlier, and here I dare lay claim to her as one of the first to reject this Irish national tradition so embraced by male

nationalist writers of the period, like Henry Lawson and Louis Esson. Prichard, ever since encountering real poverty in the streets of London and perhaps ever since being refused entry into university because of her family's poverty, had never been romanced by poverty, only insulted or held back.

AS HISTORIAN MARILYN LAKE says, there is currently much excitement concerning redefining what it means to be a citizen in the modern world. People are rethinking their relationships between collectives and individuals, the nation state and sovereignty, between the social and the political, following the collapse of communist regimes. This process recalls for radical feminists an earlier historical moment redolent with the possibility of a new democratic politics: "In the first decades of the twentieth century, the newly enfranchised women of Australia heralded the arrival on the social and political stage of the new 'woman citizen'. At home and abroad, women citizens proclaimed their great expectations".[33] What were those expectations, and were the socialist expectations of Prichard and others an important part of a mainstream feminist desire or mere aberrant dreams of eccentric intellectuals?

Much feminist history of the suffrage period focuses on women's celebrations of their newly won status as individuals delivered from what Lake terms "the masculine conjugal authority".[34] The Australian Federation of Women Voters, for example, was involved in feminist agitation to secure women's economic independence including equal pay, child endowment and maternity leave, formulating in fact a distinctive concept of Australian maternal citizenship. Within this conceptual framework, they lobbied for and won the Maternity Allowance in 1912 under Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. This was a symbolic as well as material advancement in terms of women's independence. It emphasised, for example, the socialist drive informing the feminist desire for Australia to become a 'decent' Welfare State: without recognising women as equally valuable citizens, it would never be possible to realise Prichard's dream and live "in love with the whole world". Arguably, Australian feminist conceptions of citizenship were distinctly socialist and international rather than domestic in their post-suffrage expectations.

I've attempted, in looking at the utopian, socialist desires expressed in Prichard's plays, a kind of sophisticated bush surgery, grafting theories of citizenship as they circulated in the newly federated Australia onto a cultural interrogation of the plays as feminist theatre. This marriage reveals a tradition in early Australian theatre, a tradition that argues for the tropic richness and international significance of Australian women's theatre, making a distinct contribution to both Australian and international theatre and feminist history. In addition I suggest that colonisation was not a one-way process: the ideas of colonial Australian feminists held great currency in the heart of the Empire. But as we know, Prichard herself dismissed (or pretended to) these early plays.[35] It is not unusual to read of Australian feminists of Prichard's generation disparaging their activities during the suffrage era. Perhaps Prichard, too, was a bit put off by the genteel habits of the Actresses' Franchise League, whose pretty white dresses with pink sashes risked being sullied by the dirty streets of London. No wonder that 'Her Place' took the piss out of rich women and valorised the working classes. I wonder what her audiences, rather than the reviewers, really thought of this forthright Australian critic. Another suffragette, Adela Pankhurst, of the famous Pankhurst family, who shared Prichard's socialist concerns and desire to work for a utopian future for all through the suffrage movement, was exiled by a leading suffrage organisation (the Women's Social & Political Union), for acting out similar socialist desires to Prichard's. She was exiled to a country where such ratbaggery was considered acceptable: Australia. Shortly afterwards, Prichard too returned home to this land of possibility, and recast her utopian dreaming, but that's another story.

ENDNOTES

1. This letter from Miles Franklin to Leonora Riley, dated 6 November 1915, is reproduced in Jill Roe, *My Congenials: Miles Franklin and Friends in Letters, Volume I, 1879–1938* (A&R, 1993), p.29.
2. See Susan Pfisterer & Carolyn Pickett, *Playing With Ideas: Australian Women's Drama 1890–1960* (Currency Press, 1999), and Susan Pfisterer, 'Australian Suffrage Theatre', unpublished PhD thesis, University of New England, 1996.
3. For a comprehensive chronology of suffrage dates, consult 'Appendix: Chronological List of Women's Suffrage Dates' in Coraline Daley and Melanie Nolan (eds), *Suffrage & Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (Auckland University Press/Pluto Press, 1994), p.349.
4. Sheila Stowell, *A Stage of Their Own: Feminist Playwrights of the Suffrage Era* (Manchester University

Press, 1992), p.2.
5. Ibid., p.3.
6. Christine Dymkowski, 'Entertaining Ideas: Edy Craig and the Pioneer Players', in Vivien Gardner & Susan Rutherford (eds), *The New Woman & Her Sisters: Feminism & Theatre 1850–1914* (Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.221.
7. Stargazer, 'Feminism and Theatre', *Lone Hand*, August 1907.
8. This play won the 1927 *Triad* playwrighting competition, but was not performed until forty-five years later, partially because of its treatment of Aboriginal subject matter and the requirement of a corroboree in the staging.
9. For an excellent though incomplete study of Australian published plays and unpublished plays in manuscript, consult Debra Adelaide, *Bibliography of Australian Women's Literature, 1795–1990* (Thorpe, 1991).
10. Ric Throssell, 'Paths Towards Purpose', *Australian Drama 1920–1955* (University of New England, 1986), p.28.
11. Quoted in Sandra Burchill, 'Katharine Susannah Prichard: She Did What She Could' in Kay Ferres (ed.), *The Time To Write: Australian Women Writers 1890–1930* (Penguin, 1993), pp.139–161. Extract from the Melbourne *Herald*, 25 July 1914.
12. It is worth noting that Adela Pankhurst, who shared Prichard's politics and whose concerns extended beyond the franchise itself, was exiled to Australia by her own mother, a leading suffragette, for 'diluting' the suffragette cause with her socialist politics. Pankhurst, like Prichard, went on to be a founding member of the Communist Party of Australia.
13. Prichard Papers (Series 1, Folder 6), Australian National Library (ANL). The playscript has Prichard's London Chelsea address on the frontispiece, and a 1909 date. This also suggests that she was offering it to London producers.
14. Transcript of a taped interview between Howard and Prichard, 1961. Campbell Howard Collection of Australian Plays in Manuscript (CHC), University of New England.
15. Handwritten note on the manuscript of 'The Burglar', Prichard Papers (ANL).
16. Burchill, p.141.
17. This and all subsequent citations refer to the copy of 'The Burglar' housed in the CHC.
18. This audience figure is from *The Socialist* (14 October 1910) which said that the "select audience . . . followed the performances with keen interest and insight". Another publication, *The Wonthaggi* (8 October 1910) implied that "there was a familiarity between performers and patrons". *The Sporting and Dramatic News* (13 October 1910) said that "the drama night brings together a collection of artistic Bohemians".
19. The Melbourne *Herald*, 6 October 1910.
20. *The Sporting and Dramatic News*, 13 October 1910.
21. *Labor Calls*, 13 October 1910.
22. *The Sporting and Dramatic News*, 13 October 1910.
23. Burchill, p.144.
24. From the copy of 'My Place' held in the CHC, p.10.
25. *Votes For Women!*, 17 July 1914.
26. Ibid., p.650.
27. Drusilla Modjeska, *Exiles At Home: Australian Women Writers 1920–1945* (A&R/Sirius, 1981), p.6.
28. Letter from Prichard to Howard, dated June 1960 (CHC). Prichard was commenting on her perceptions of Australian theatre both in 1960 and reflecting on the time she was first writing plays.
29. Tony Thomas, 'Katharine Susannah Prichard Interviewed', *The Critic*, 22 December 1967.
30. Cath Ellis, 'Socialist realism in the Australian literary context and Katharine Susannah Prichard', in Carole Ferrier & Rebecca Pelan (eds), *The Point of Change: Marxism/Australia/History/Theory* (Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, 1998), p.137.
31. Toril Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (Routledge, 1998), p.8.
32. Katharine Brisbane, 'Introduction', *Australia Plays: New Australian Drama* (Currency Press, 1996), p.xi.
33. Marilyn Lake, 'Personality, Individuality, Nationality: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship 1902–1940', *Australian Feminist Studies*, no.19 (1994), p.25.
34. Ibid.
35. Whilst Prichard was still alive she received a series of letters from Campbell Howard, who was attempting to compile an archive of Australian plays in manuscript, asking for copies of her plays. Prichard modestly responded that she was "afraid these scripts will not add much to the value of Australian drama, except to show how immature my first efforts were", adding that she was "inclined to think the fire is a better place for them than the National Library". Howard countered that her plays would in fact have a distinct significance for Australian drama, and Prichard finally acquiesced. ('Howard/Prichard Correspondence', 1959, CHC.)

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Carolyn van Langenberg

G.M. Glaskin, Novelist and Stockbroker

ON THE MORNING OF 11 March 2000, at 3.05, Gerald Marcus Glaskin died in Perth's Hollywood Private Hospital. Gerry Glaskin. Who?

When I began research for a novel that required some understanding about the relationship between Australia and Malaysia during the 1950s, Adrian Vickers of Wollongong University suggested I should read a couple of Glaskin's novels. My reply would not surprise most eastcoast types – Gerry Glaskin? Who?

I made good Adrian's advice, finding in Fisher Library at the University of Sydney both *A Lion In the Sun*, a novel set in Singapore during the time of the Hertogh race riots in December 1950,[1] and *The Beach of Passionate Love*,[2] set in postwar Kelantan, Malaya. Taken as examples of Australian consciousness as it was developing in the postwar period, both novels show a willingness to take a friendly step north of the coastal cities of Australia to establish links with the Federated States of Malaya and the Crown Colony of Singapore. The novels were published in 1960 and 1961 respectively, several years after 1957 when the Federation of Malaya was granted Independence from the British Colonial government. (The related but separate history of Singapore negotiating independence from Britain during the fifties is turbulent and complicated.)

The novels are not particularly literary, and they are not self-consciously Australian. The principal characters or personas, like Glaskin himself, were curious and urbane men who settled for an indefinite period of time in Singapore to do business, eventually to move on. The writing is marked by the confidence of someone who has shared his social and commensal habits with Chinese and Malays and to a lesser extent the Indian peoples of the archipelago. Glaskin engages with both setting and language, writing as someone with a zest for life and not a regressive character or an agonizing superego; nor, indeed, as a bronzed country boy who heroically survived the Second World War and the dreaded un-like-us. It was as if Malaya and Singapore contained places and social milieus Glaskin thoroughly enjoyed being in. Nevertheless, in his novels he expressed the informed person's neo-colonial attitudes of the decade he was writing in. For example, in *Beach Of Passionate Love,* he expounds on East/West difference thus :

> It sometimes took years for a European to acquire even the faintest glimmer of understanding of the Asian mind, or find a chink of light in the huge dark complexity of Asian thought.[3]

So who was this Glaskin, this G.M. known as Gerry?

I soon discovered, by way of an AustLit search, that Glaskin was a prolific writer with twenty-one or so titles to his credit. Panther, Arrow, Four Square and other imprints altered some of the hardback titles for publication in paperback editions. His first book, *A World of Our Own*,[4] published in the UK by James Barrie in 1955, won him a Commonwealth Literary Award. A note by C.P. Snow praised it as "One of the most interesting manuscripts that has come into my hands for a long time."

I had read *The Malayan Trilogy* by Anthony Burgess,[5] *Rubber* by Madelon H. Lulofs,[6] and the wonderful *Sacrilege in Malaya* (*Sortilège Malais*)[7] by Pierre Boulle, but not this Australian, this best-selling, prize-winning novelist. I took note that, apart from *Two Women: Two Novellas*,[8] his first publishers were British. Early Australian reviewers tended to be cursory, only noting his existence in composite reviews. John Ewers dismissed his writing as uneven, the novels plot driven.[9]

John Hetherington in 1962[10] and Elizabeth Riddell in 1969[11] praised both him and his work, but his long years in Amsterdam may have made him seem too European, his interest in sexuality unsettling. Seven

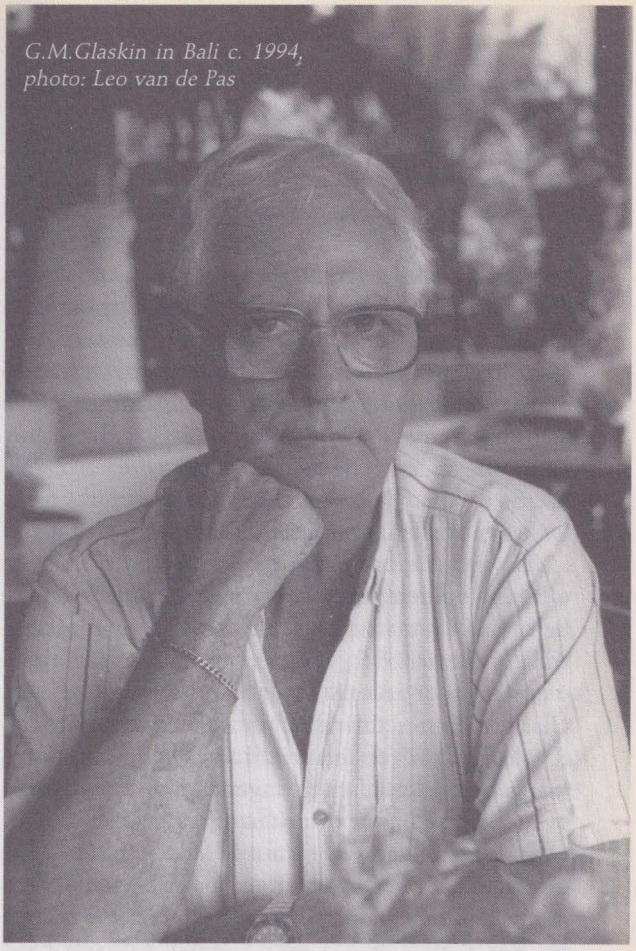
of his novels have been translated into European languages, principally French and Dutch. According to Hetherington, the hardback edition of *A World Of Our Own* sold fifteen thousand copies in Norwegian, and a further thirty thousand in paperback.[12]

In 1961 he published *The Land That Sleeps*, a commissioned travel book about Australia, for Double Day in New York, and Barrie & Rockliff, London. In *Flight To Landfall,* the few Aboriginal characters were not invested with preternatural powers. He succeeded to describe the hygiene of living among camp dogs with refreshing candour, and convey respect for knowing a thing or two about the land, thus writing characters who were a mix of commonsense and stubbornness.

Whatever the vicissitudes, Glaskin appears to have been relegated outside mainstream Australian thinking that continues to perpetuate the binary of 'them' and 'us', 'hetero' and 'queer', 'white' and 'non-white'.

I enjoyed a brief correspondence with Gerry Glaskin. Unfortunately I never met him, someone who I might have liked for his flexibility of mind and love of knowledge, and a certain magnanimity of character. Elizabeth Riddell described him – "complicated, worldly", "a personality simultaneously flamboyant and disciplined", someone who was affectionate and forthright.[13] She also wrote of him as someone known by West Australian writers.

After his death, Gerry's friend, Leo van de Pas, kindly sent me expressions of grief read at his funeral by friends. With these, I put together a portrait.



G.M.Glaskin in Bali c. 1994, photo: Leo van de Pas

GERALD MARCUS GLASKIN was born in Perth on 16 December 1923, the eldest of seven children. Glaskin was almost twenty-one years older than Hilary, his youngest sibling.

He was fortunate in his mother and father (who was secretary of the Road Board), all four of his grandparents, and five unmarried aunts. He was happy and loved, his insatiable curiosity encouraged by the pleasure his adult relatives took in him. Their attitude towards him constituted his wealth, for his family were financially constrained.

Although Glaskin was a very good student, winning a scholarship to continue his studies, he had to leave school at fifteen to help his semi-invalid father support the family. He worked at several jobs before enlisting in the Royal Australian Navy, and he suffered a wartime accident. Coils of signal-halyard wire broke loose from winches and wrapped like a boa constrictor round him, pinioning his arms, cutting his flesh, then snapping, breaking both his arms. If he had been twenty-one at the time of the accident, the on-board Navy surgeon would have amputated his right arm. As he was under twenty-one, the surgeon needed his parents' permission to perform so serious an operation. He was held together until he was admitted to the Hollywood Hospital in Perth where doctors observed his broken bones were mending well. They left him in one piece.

Initially, he could not use his arms. The man in the next bed, also a casualty of war, could not use his legs. To make the best of their predicament over the many months they spent in hospital, they read stories to each other. After listening to a particularly egregious effort, Glaskin remarked he could do better. He dictated *Got Him!* a naval story, to his fellow sailor-patient and the *Western Mail,* a Perth newspaper, published it. By the time he was discharged from the hospital and invalided out of the Navy, he had written and sold twelve stories.

In 1943, with the use of his arms again, he went to Sydney where he worked for a soap manufacturing firm, in sales and in advertising – writing radio

jingles about soap. Finding this work boring, he joined the Air Force.

There are two stories about his re-enlisting. One has Glaskin in Sydney in a queue of young men, all of whom were required to pass a number of physical tests. His arms were still weak. He knew he would not be able to lift himself onto the horizontal bar that was coming up in front of him. In the nick of time, an officer asked if he was a Glaskin from Western Australia and, when he said Yes, he was introduced to Sergeant Ronald Glaskin, a cousin of his father. While chatting, Gerry kept an eye on his place in the queue. When the other young men had passed the horizontal bar, he excused himself and continued with the tests. He was accepted, later sent to Canada for training.

The other story has him enlisting in the RAAF without incident, then being sent to Canada where he trained as a navigator. An RAAF liaison officer, Air Vice-Marshall S. J. Goble, one day asked if there were any connection with the discharged G. M. Glaskin referred to within a sheaf of papers headed RAN. Glaskin replied truthfully, to which Goble wagged an admonishing finger and, with twinkling eye, said, "You have been a naughty boy".[14]

I am reminded of Seamus Heaney's poem, *The Errand*[15] in which the boy looks up to his father who has asked him to go on a fool's errand, and trumps the older man with a grin. Glaskin's novels have about them the quality of an engaging boy with an irrepressible desire to spin rollicking good tales.

At first reading, I found the language in Glaskin's two Asian novels, if they must be called that, lacked self-consciousness. The personas observed people and places with fascination.

In *A Lion In the Sun*, Glaskin takes the reader into Straits Chinese households and streets and markets as well as the uneasy and superficially privileged world of the colonial elite. In *The Beach of Passionate Love,* the reader is introduced to Malay characters knowledgeably as beautiful portraits, suggestive of a studied and respectful separation of British, European and Australian from the Malay. I compared his work with that by Anthony Burgess. *The Malayan Trilogy*, abounding as it does with Eurasians, Indians and Chinese and set in the early sixties, is said to set the standard of brilliance for novels about the Malay Archipelago. I found Burgess marked by a tendency to slot characters into types, ensuring more hilarity than warmth; and Glaskin's lack of world-weary irony strikes a balance with hedonistic pleasure.

A Lion In The Sun begins after the Second World War. Like Patrick White, Glaskin doesn't dwell on war. In correspondence to me, he said it is an autobiographical novel, about the time he left Australia for Singapore. He worked for Wearne Brothers, and later joined the stockbroking firm, Lyle & Evatt, eventually to become a partner. When he was financially secure, he left the firm to concentrate on writing.

Geoffrey Graham, the persona, is Glaskin himself. Geoffrey's life story follows Glaskin's as outlined above – some of the story about wartime injuries and his first literary success form the beginning of *A Lion In The Sun.* In Singapore, Graham/Glaskin is a naïve matinee hero, living life as if it were the pictures (movies), with cinematic twisting plots played out against a background compiled of description and action-packed dramas. Graham/Glaskin is a jejeune Errol Flynn, startled by sexuality, sadly discovering that his friend, Bradley Chase, is a wife beater. He also discovers Bradley's wife, the beautiful Vivienne, a Eurasian, lived in permanent danger of the non-white aspect of her character. It was a colonial belief that, if you were of mixed European and a less 'civilized' race (read coloured), you would most certainly be venal and oversexed.

The strength of the novel is in its descriptions of the life led by the ex-pats in Singapore, in the finance community itself, and the rise of anti-colonial, nationalist political feeling among the Singaporeans themselves. The island-state was beset by contradictory ideologies. A palpable fear of communism interdicted by a hatred of the harsh colonial administration persuaded some Singaporeans to embrace socialism and Marxism and the extremes of Maoism. The Hertogh riot was a turning point, galvanizing the maelstrom of passions Glaskin powerfully gives life to. The character of Geoffrey Graham, however, fails to elicit sympathy, succeeding more to irritate as an immature young man than to engage as a charming novice.

The Beach of Passionate Love is a travel novel, a genre with a plot that provides ample opportunity for Glaskin to indulge his descriptive writing of the arts, the environment, the styles of cultivation and industry, dress sense, music and food, housing, health and sexual practices in the many villages and towns and rural districts through which he drove slowly in a journey from the west to the east coast. The roads, after all, were unsealed.

The Australian George Gransden pursues a sentimental journey to meet a woman, Maimunah, who saved him from the Japanese when they invaded

Malaya in 1942. Maimunah hid him in a fisherman's hut on a beach named Pantai Cintra, literally the Beach of Passionate Love. This beach actually exists and is known by that name. After one brief night of ecstasy with Maimunah, she arranges for his safe escape. George and Maimunah, twenty-three and eighteen respectively in 1942, accept fate has intervened with the war to keep them apart. After the Japanese surrendered in 1945, George, again a character drawn from Glaskin's experiences, works in the finance industry in the Crown Colony of Singapore for ten years. Before returning to Australia, he chances to resume contact with Maimunah. By then she is a widow, and wants George to take her eldest son, Hamid, back to Australia with him so that he may attend university in Perth. She has several other children.

George, in the company of a strange Englishman, Harry Lee,[16] drives to Kelantan to meet Maimunah. The novel includes in its multiple and Hollywood-style plots a thoroughly fascinating analysis of the Kelantan fishing industry, and the introduction of a fish-canning plant. There are brief romances and casual sex which provide an opportunity to discuss the pragmatics of regular and emotionally uninvolved liaisons, George frankly addressing another kind of sexuality – that of paedophilia. He has regular sex partners, girls between fifteen and eighteen, "some as old as twenty". And his gaze, through his creator, is queer, dwelling on water droplets beading on Malay boys' brown backs and their washboard-flat stomachs, the women seen not unsympathetically but as clothes props for elaborate costumes.

George fits the stereotype of the Orientalist who exploits the sexual space free of the withering puritanism of fifties Australia. And I wished for Glaskin the subtle poetics of Vladimir Nabakov when writing about these casual seductions. For the character George finds them infantilizing, and the poetics go no further. George remains egoistic, shrugging off the lifestyle he has participated in. The wiser Nabakov, with calculated insight and compassion, explored the pain of remembering and forgetting the sensual in *Lolita*.

Glaskin's perspective is drawn from what might have passed during the fifties and sixties as avant garde, but the aesthetics engaged are conventional. His principal characters observe. So, too, one may argue, does the handsome Australian Guy Hamilton observe Indonesia, Indonesians and Indonesian cosmopolitanism in *The Year of Living Dangerously* by Christopher Koch,[17] the story brought to the reader through the dwarf, Billy Kwan, a news photographer and an Australian-born Chinese. The difference lies in the lively engagement of Geoffrey Graham and George Gransden, Glaskin's personae, with the place under observation. His perspective is closer to that of the poetry of S.K. Kelen in *Shimmerings,*[18] where the face glides like a moon, observing and laughing with the observed, not laughing at the characters given life as Burgess does in *The Malayan Trilogy*.

My initial interest in Glaskin was because he wrote about Malaysia and Singapore during the fifties. I found a mixture of received, colonial and neo-colonial ideas that other research shows were current when he was writing *A Lion In The Sun* and *The Beach Of Passionate Love*. His was the voice of one who bothered to get to know Malayans and Chinese, learn languages, musical instruments, the complicated politics of relationships, not as a colonial anthropologist observing 'them', or a white ironist having a laugh, but as an interested boy enjoying good company. The writing thrills with the mayhem totally absent in suburban Australia. He loved difference.

If his writing of race and sexuality with cinematic rather than literary flair may be said to be ahead of his time, none of these influences made him equal to Nabokov, or indeed Burroughs. Was he committed to not taking risks, needing to make a living from whatever he worked at? But his focus on sexuality suggests he would take risks – *O Love, O Loneliness*[19] is about incest. I have not been able to find a copy of *No End To The Way,*[20] a novel he wrote under a pseudonym when writing queer was not mainstream.

Perhaps G. M. Glaskin crossed cultures and explored sexuality, playing an anxious game in order to throw out doubts about identity and write things down. When to survive is paramount, to redefine the self is life.

ENDNOTES

1. The Singapore government ruled to return a Dutch-Eurasian girl, Maria Hertogh, to her European parents. They had lost contact with her when they were interned during the Japanese Occupation. Maria was brought up by a Malay family as their daughter, and as a Muslim. To circumvent losing her to her European parents, they married her to a Muslim. She would have been about thirteen years old at the time. Malay and Nationalist sentiments were stirred to violence by the colonial government's disregard of the adoptive parents' wishes for Maria's future, and police mishandling of the situation. A two-day riot, in which eighteen people were killed and 173 injured, ensued.
2. Glaskin, *Beach Of Passionate Love,* Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1961.

3. Ibid, p.161.
4. Glaskin, *A World Of Our Own*, James Barrie, London, 1955.
5. Burgess, *The Malayan Trilogy*, Penguin, 1972. First published by William Heinemann in 1956, 1958 and 1959 respectively.
6. Lulofs, *Rubber*, OUP, 1987. Translated from the Dutch by G.J. Renier and Irene Clephane. English translation first published by Cassells & Co. in 1933.
7. Boulle, *Sacrilege In Malaya*, OUP, 1983. First published in 1953.
8. Sydney, Ure Smith, 1975.
9. Ewers, *Creative Writing In Australia: A Selective Survey*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1966, p.193.
10. Hetherington, *Forty-Two Faces*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1962, pp.227–231.
11. Riddell, 'Glaskin who detests the West but keeps coming back' in *The Australian*, 20 December 1969, p.16.
12. Ibid, Hetherington, p.227.
13. Ibid, Riddell.
14. Ibid, Hetherington, pp.228–9.
15. Heaney, *The Spirit Level*, New York, Farrer Straus Giroux, 1996, p.65.
16. Glaskin never explained why he gave this unusual name to a Mancunian investor. It is the Anglicised alias Lee Kwan Yew used. At the time Glaskin was writing, Lee Kwan Yew was a well-known member of the People's Action Party, a key player in the successful forging of Singapore's Independence.
17. Koch, *The Year Of Living Dangerously*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1978.
18. Kelen, *Shimmerings*, fip, Wollongong, 2000.
19. Glaskin, *O Love, O Loneliness*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1964.
20. Jackson [pseud.], *No End To The Way*, Barrie & Rockliff, London, 1965.

Carolyn van Langenberg's novel fish lips *(Indra Publishing), the first in a trilogy about love, death and madness, will be published in October this year.*

Returned to sender

Host unknown,
host not found.
Arrival-Date: Mon,
1 May 2000 20:22:07 +1000 (EST)
Final-Recipient: RFC822;
Action: failed
Status: 5.1.2
Remote-MTA: DNS;
Diagnostic-Code: SMTP; 550
Host unknown
Host not found.
Last-Attempt-Date: Mon,
1 May 2000 20:22:33 +1000 (EST)
Return-Path:
mail undeliverable.

Lyn McCredden

Indifferent Angels

You see them again,
in dreams or poems,
or in other faces –
the dead father,
the lost child,
the unloving lover –
and you wonder again
if it's for reassurance
or revenge they're sent.
The years stretch out
and you walk through them,
brushing shoulders with these ghosts
who care enough to visit.
Or do they – indifferent angels –
taunt and disperse,
tiny feathered shadows on air,
re-sent through virtual spaces,
simulacra moving you
regardless,
with their blank stare,
their hollow promise.

Lyn McCredden

The Last Ned Kelly Last Stand

Craig Cormick

IF YOU COULD LOOK INTO Johnathon's eyes you might think he is crying. He's got them narrowed down to small slits. Trying his best to keep the sun's glare out. Trying to keep the tears in. He tries to look just at the road directly in front of him. Tries to keep it all together. Then another quick kick-kick-kick on the back of his seat.

"Bloodywellstopit!" he shouts. He is about to say – it hurts! – but he doesn't. "Just stop it!" he says. Without looking back to see which of the three boys is kicking his seat.

He frowns deeply and lowers the sun shade. He wishes he had a little narrow visor to look out at the road through. To screen that sharp glare. He wipes a few stinging tears away quickly. He can imagine the boys saying, "Dad's crying! Dad's crying!" Especially Matthew. Since turning thirteen he's been bloody impossible.

There is one more kick on the seat behind him. Not so hard. He pretends he didn't feel it. As if the thickness of the seat has protected him from the blow. As if it could protect them from his anger.

"Why couldn't we stay home and get a video?" Mark asks. He's happy to watch the same video ten times, over and over and over.

"This'll be fun," Johnathon says. Trying yet again to get some enthusiasm going amongst the boys. "Ned Kelly!" he says.

"Isn't it on video?" asks Mark.

Jonathon says, "Could be. But this'll be more fun. An outdoor screening! You've never been to one before, have you?"

"I bet we'll never go to one again," mumbles Matthew.

Jonathon tilts the mirror. Looks to find Luke. The youngest of the three boys. Stares at him. "You'll like it, won't you Luke?" he asks him.

"Sure," says Luke. And the other two whisper, "Crawler!"

"And do you know who plays Ned Kelly?" Johnathon asks.

"Nuh," says Mark. "Should we?"

"Mick Jagger," says Johnathon.

"Who's he?"

"He was in a band," says Johnathon. "The Rolling Stones. Have you ever heard of them?" And he wishes Kate was with them. She'd have been able to explain it better, he thinks.

"Is he still alive?" asks Mark.

"Barely," says Johnathon.

"So what's the thing about Ned Kelly?" Matthew asks. And Johnathon wishes he could tell him. Wishes he understood it properly himself.

"He's a real hero," says Johnathon.

"What position does he play?" asks Matthew.

"And when I was about your age my dad took me to see this film." And he can still remember the feeling of that, he thinks. Sitting in the darkened picture theatre, his eyes wide enough to nearly fall out of his head as Mick Jagger stood there and defied all the police out to get him. "You can't shoot me!" he shouted. His dad had to tell him the Ned Kelly story for weeks after that. Had to make him a cardboard Ned Kelly helmet. Had to promise to take him to see the movie again another day.

Another day, Johnathon thinks.

"WHAT'S SO GREAT about this Ned Kelly film?" Mark asks.

"Because they filmed bits of it in Bungendore," says Jonathon.

"So?"

"So they're showing it in Bungendore. Don't you think that's neat?"

"No," says Mark.

"Neat?" asks Matthew. "Dad. Adults don't say 'neat' unless they really want to sound like a dork."

"I mean neat as complete. From Bungendore around the world and back to Bungendore."

Luke nods his head, like he gets it, although he probably doesn't, Johnathon thinks.

"So?" asks Mark again. "What's so great about it?"

THEY PULL IN to Bungendore at about 6.30. Johnathon drives around the streets slowly, looking for any sign of the Ned Kelly film festival. But there's nothing. The village looks almost deserted. He drives down to the oval. "Must be on the oval," he says. But there's nothing there. Not even much grass. Dry short yellow stubble and dust.

Jonathon wishes he'd brought the flyer along with him. Feels sure it said the oval. Or the village green. But where would a dusty hot little place like Bungendore hide a village green?

"The oval's empty," says Matthew.

"Yeah," says Johnathon. They drive down a few more side streets.

"I want something to drink," says Mark.

"Yeah. Me too," says Matthew.

"Let's get a drink dad," says Luke.

"Yeah. Okay," says Johnathon.

They find a little supermarket and Johnathon buys them a small bottle of soft drink each. And standing there, out the front of the shop, Johnathon sees a small photocopied poster with a picture of Ned Kelly on it, on the window. Johnathon checks the dates and times. Checks his watch. Adjusts for the date being two days old.

"It should be on," he says.

"Ask the lady in the shop," says Mark.

"Yeah, ask her," says Matthew. Johnathon thinks a minute. Feels very self-conscious about this. Hitches his pants a little higher. Tells the boys, "Wait here," and he strolls back into the shop, trying his best to look a little like a bankrobber.

"WE'VE GOT TO fill in a little bit of time until dark," he tells the boys.

"How long is that?" asks Luke, turning to look at the low setting sun.

"I dunno. Maybe half an hour," Johnathon lies. "Want to walk around the place a bit?"

"And do what?"

"Look at the houses."

"Sounds boring," says Mark.

Johnathon smiles at him. That same smile he gives Luke. Feels himself holding it tightly there upon his face.

HALF AN HOUR LATER they're sitting on the dusty village green. The low setting sun hot on the back of their necks. Still waiting for others to arrive.

"How long has it been now?" asks Mark.

"About twenty minutes," says Johnathon. "They'll be here any minute."

"I'm thirsty again," says Matthew.

"I haven't got enough money for more drinks," says Johnathon. He hates it when he has to tell the boys that. Gets angry with himself for being angry.

"There's some bottles of water in the car," he says.

"Yeah," says Matthew. "I think I'll wait a bit longer until they're really good and warm."

"Mum would've brought soft drinks," says Mark.

And Johnathon has a sudden feeling of wanting to lie down on the prickly grass and close his eyes to the boys. Wants it to be dark so he doesn't have to mask his face from them all the time. Doesn't want them to see the anger and the sorrow in his eyes. Wishes to shut his eyes and imagine it all better. Him and the boys sitting there and laughing. A gang. All four of them.

"Let's pretend that we're the Kelly gang," he says.

"Our name's not Kelly," says Matthew and looks away from him.

THE TECHNICIANS FINALLY arrive and start setting up the screen. Johnathon tries to get a bit of enthusiasm going amongst the boys again.

"Let's go and watch him," he says.

"That sucks," says Matthew.

"You know what I remember most about this film?" Johnathon asks. None of the boys answers. Not even Luke. "The bit where they shot him," Johnathon says. "He comes walking out of the mist, with this grey coat over his armour, and the police are firing at him, and the bullets are bouncing off and he shouts out, 'You can't shoot me! I'm invincible!'"

ABOUT HALF AN HOUR LATER the locals start arriving. Land Cruisers and Audis pull up, and families and friends assemble in small groups. They spread blankets and sit on Eskies. Open cooked chicken and pour wine into long-stemmed glasses. Johnathon sees the blokes sitting so comfortably with their wives and kids. Watches the way some women lean against their husbands. Touch each other as they talk. And he wishes again that Kate was with him.

"Should've brought a picnic," he says. More to himself than to the boys. A small truck pulls up next to the technicians and starts unloading stuff. The boys look around for other kids to play with. Hoping to see other boys running down to the trees, kicking a football or chucking rocks, or anything. But they just sit there with their families. Talking together. Laughing. Having too good a time of it.

"Hey, look," says Johnathon. The bloke from the truck is setting up a suit of Ned Kelly armour on a wooden mount. "Let's go and look at it."

The kids drag themselves to their feet reluctantly and wander over with him, scuffing their feet in the dust, looking longingly at the other kids. And their chicken. And soft drinks.

Jonathon says G'day to the bloke with the armour, who says G'day back. Johnathon looks the armour over carefully. To see which of the Kelly gang's it is modelled on. But it's not a good enough copy to tell.

"Is this from some museum or what?" Johnathon asks.

"Dunno," says the bloke. "I think it was used in the film." Johnathon looks at it carefully. Knows it wasn't. More likely made by some local hobby welder.

"Ned Kelly made his armour out of plough blades," says the bloke.

"Plough boards," says Johnathon. "Large iron sheets. They curved them by beating them on a log."

"Oh yeah?" says the bloke, like he couldn't really care. Like he gets corrected by Ned Kelly enthusiasts all the time.

"Can I try it on?" Johnathon asks him.

"Sure," the bloke says. "I guess." Then he wanders away like it's going to be on Johnathon's head to look after it since he knows so much about it.

Jonathon smiles to the boys as he puts the armour on. Can't help from grinning. And it's heavy. Real bloody heavy. The weight of the breastplate drags on his shoulders. And the edge of the armour is cutting into his collarbones. But he says, "Look at me boys. I'm Ned Kelly!"

He looks out the small gap in the helmet and sees bits of the boys' faces. Moves his head around to see them better. "What dya reckon?" he asks. It's hard to read the looks on their faces.

Luke walks up slowly and pounds one fist on the breastplate. "That's hard," he says.

"It sure is," says Johnathon. "It has to be."

Luke does it again. Harder. "Did you feel that?"

"No," Johnathon lies.

"Why's it so hard?"

"To protect the heart," Johnathon says. His voice echoing around in his head, muffled and distorted, sounding like somebody else is saying it.

Luke takes a step back and puts his hands on his hips and Johnathon has to move the mask around again to see him. He doesn't like the cut-down view of his son. Only seeing a small part of him at a time.

There is a sudden sound of shooting behind them. They turn to see a man done up in armour riding out of the trees across the oval.

"Look kids," says Johnathon, "It's Ned Kelly!"

The boys turn to look at him. "He's too fat," says Matthew. The other boys agree. They watch the

other kids run over to touch his horse.

"Want to go see him?" Johnathon asks, trying to make it sound like a dare. The kids shrug and wander over to hang around with the other kids.

Johnathon takes the helmet off and looks at it. Wonders what it is about masks. Kate had accused him of masking his emotions too much. He wishes again that he'd brought her along. She'd have to meet the boys one day.

FINALLY IT IS DARK ENOUGH. The crowd is quite large now. The projector finally begins to whir. The crowd cheers. Except the boys. They're bored shitless. A broad bright landscape emerges onto the screen before them and a foppish looking Mick Jagger with half a beard strides across the screen. The crowd applauds and whistles. Mums mostly, thinks Johnathon.

"Who's that?" asks Mark.

"Ned Kelly," says Johnathon.

"He's too thin," says Matthew.

"He looks like a wanker," says Mark. "Can we go now?"

"He used to be a lot bigger and stronger," says Johnathon.

SUDDENLY THE LOCALS all cheer again. They've seen a bit of their village in the film. Johnathon looks at the house and tries to remember if they'd seen it when driving around. Maybe, he thinks. "Do you remember that house?" he asks. Mark, who has a mind like a trap, says, "Dunno".

"I've seen it," says Matthew. "It was in a real dumb film."

Pretty soon Mark and Matthew have wandered off down to the trees. To chuck rocks or do something. Johnathon doesn't care. Luke is sitting on his lap, watching the film with him. Ned is making his armour now. There with his gang. The four of them together. Ready to try it on for the first time. Ned lifts up his rifle to demonstrate how invincible the armour is. "Watch this," says Johnathon. Pow-peoing. The bullets bounce off the armour.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?" asks Johnathon. But Luke doesn't answer. He's nearly asleep.

"I'm tired," he says. "Why couldn't mum come?"

And Johnathon realises it's going to be a lot harder than he thought.

BY THE TIME THE KELLY GANG have taken over the inn at Glenrowan, and carried out their plan to rip up the rails ahead of the police train, Mark and Matthew are back.

"We're bored."

"Let's go home."

Matthew kicks Luke to wake him up, and he starts crying. "Let's go!" Matthew says.

"Go and sit in the car," Johnathon says to him. "I'll be right there." He gives Mark the keys without taking his eyes off the movie. As if it's somehow important to watch this bit closely. To watch the plan go wrong. The police arrive and sneak up on Ned and the gang. Not knowing he's wearing his armour. And he's thinking of masks again. The way he thinks of Kate while he's fucking his wife. Imagining it were her. Covering his face and his heart. He knows he must tell her and the boys that he's leaving them the next day. Everything all planned. Then Ned runs out of the inn into the darkness, leaving the other three behind. He doesn't even know that Joe Byrne gets shot. Falls to the floor by the bar, dead. Lies there as if sleeping.

And Johnathon can remember seeing this bit with his dad. He'd hung onto his hand and wanted to close his eyes, but couldn't stop from watching. Ned turning around to go back through the police lines to save his gang. And he thinks of himself wading through the Drizabones and Eskies to get the boys. Carrying them all upon his shoulders and riding out somewhere together into the darkness. All of them laughing and shouting together, "We're the Kelly Gang! We're invincible!" Driving off together somewhere. Him and the boys and Kate.

And Johnathon is lip-synching to the movie now. Wishing he was holding his father's hand again. Stilling the terrible beating in his heart. Making

him feel braver. Not afraid of anything. Not even his own faults.

He knows his wife will never let him take the boys. He is afraid of the violence of her reaction when he tells her about Kate. Wishes there were some easier way to make things work out.

Ned is moving through the early morning mist now. Firing at the startled police. Driving them back before him. But he's wounded and they rally against him. The police move in closer. Jumping from tree to tree. Ducking behind logs and firing at him all the while. He stumbles, but keeps walking.

"Daaad!" Johnathon can hear Mark calling from somewhere in the crowd.

Then Ned is standing there in close-up. Then the camera does a Ned point-of-view shot. A thin slit in the helmet masks the police. The helmet moves back and forward to find them as they creep closer. The magnified rhythm of his heavy breathing sounds in Johnathon's head. The solid thang of bullets on the breastplate. Johnathon starts breathing faster too. Feels his heart beating faster. Then the camera is in front again. Then he says it. "You can't shoot me!" Johnathon says the words in time. "I'm made of iron," says Ned.

"Daaaad!" calls Mark again, his dark silhouette walking across the screen. Bumping past Ned Kelly as Sergeant Steele kneels down and aims his shotgun at his legs. When Mark's shadow has gone past Ned is lying on the ground. Defeated.

Mark hits his father hard on the thigh. "Let's go home," he says. "We're sick of waiting!"

And Johnathon lets Mark lead him back out through the crowd. Back around behind the projector this time. Over towards the car.

"He was supposed to say 'I'm invincible'," says Johnathon.

JOHNATHON HOPS IN the car and the boys are drumming their feet on the back of his seat again. But he doesn't say anything. Just sits there. Unable to move.

"Can we go somewhere better tomorrow?" asks Mark.

"And bring mum with us next time?" asks Luke.

And still Johnathon says nothing. Still hasn't started the car. Is glad it's dark now. Is glad the boys can't see his eyes and think he might be crying.

Ian Ward

Can Hugh Stretton's new introduction turn the tide for economics?

HOW LIFE HAS CHANGED for economics departments over the past forty years. They have gone from:

1. The golden age of the 1960s with abundant jobs for undergraduate majors in economics, numerous compulsory subjects in the curriculum – at Monash University there were seven – and a reasonable balance between differing views or economic ideologies; to:

2. The 1980s and early 1990s when the battle of ideas swung sharply to the classical liberals or economic rationalists. While economic departments were coming under increasing competitive pressure from accounting and finance, management and marketing, confidence remained quite high. We could still reflect on our proud history and the number of Nobel Prize winners. Most economists seemed to be in harmony with the prevailing values of the day and the reality of sharply declining interest in economics at school and university was still in the future; to:

3. The late 1990s and into the new millennium which has witnessed some redressing of the ideological imbalance but which has also seen a sharp turning away from economics. This has been reflected in a significant decline in enrolments at both the university and the school level in Australia. Increasingly, it is the perception of entering undergraduate students in Business/Commerce Faculties that an undergraduate specialisation in economics is unlikely to prove to be a winner in the job market. This is reflected in falling enrolments in economics subjects at most Australian universities. The low perception of economics by first-year students at Monash University's Faculty of Business and Economics is reflected in research my colleagues and I carried out. This indicated that there was a very large gap in the positive perception by students of accounting and finance, business law and taxation, marketing and management compared to economics and economic statistics.[1] The perceived need for greater student choice and flexibility of the degree programs has resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of compulsory subjects in economics. For example, at Monash University, Clayton campus, the decline is from seven to two. At the other campuses it is now only one.

Into this environment steps Hugh Stretton with his new text, *Economics, A New Introduction*.[2] Stretton sees this comprehensive piece of work as the basis for a four-semester study of introductory economics. It is clearly a very impressive intellectual achievement by one of Australia's outstanding social scientists. What distinguishes this text from those now in use is its broad social science approach which integrates analysis, values, institutional structures and historical perspective, together with a reliance on the written word rather than on endless diagrams and formulas and marketing driven gimmicks.

How does this text fit into the contemporary environment in Business/Commerce Faculties in Australia? Is it likely to win acceptance from many subject leaders or will it be viewed as an approach that was better suited to the golden age of the 1960s? While it is understandable that he rejects the unfortunate shift to an almost evangelical treatment of first-year economics, which reflects, in his view, the dominance achieved by what he calls the Right, is this book likely to prove to be an effective alternative for those engaged in the teaching of first-year economics?

We can attempt to resolve this question by looking first at what are, in my view, the considerable

strengths of his approach and then at its limitations before attempting to reach a conclusion as to whether or not his book represents a realistic option in today's rather chilly environment.

Stretton has written a book which reflects his high level of scholarship over many decades. It is clearly written and handles complex issues in an entertaining manner. He relies on reasoned arguments rather than on simple mathematical proofs to reach his conclusion. In so doing, he is, at all times, encouraging the reader to take a critical perspective which he combines with an extremely personal, even intimate relationship between himself and the reader. By doing so, he seeks to open the mind, stimulate interest and encourage a strong commitment to the study of economics.

One particularly attractive feature of Stretton's work is his adoption of a broad social science approach to the study of economics. While he recognises the centrality of economic choices, he correctly stresses the need for students to study these choices in the context of the economic system; economic ideology, including values; institutional structure; and historical perspective. Clearly, he argues, the relevance of a particular hypothesis cannot be divorced from social reality and the prevailing values. As social reality and values change, so does the relevant hypothesis and body of analysis as well as the relevant economic policies advocated.

The broad social science approach adopted is further reflected in the range of outcomes which, he argues, need to be considered. Our focus should not be restricted to outcomes such as resource allocation, growth, stability and household income distribution. Attention needs to be given to outcomes such as gender, social and spatial inequality; insecurity; cooperation and participation in the home and in the firm; and stress in the workplace. Short term costs associated with structural change also need to be considered.

In contrast to the typical contemporary textbook, Stretton places considerable emphasis on the central role played by values in the study of economic analysis and economic policy. He totally rejects attempts to convince students that if they master economic analytical concepts they will be able to derive the correct answer. Of course such books, like McTaggart et al, *Economics*,[3] include a passing reference to why economists disagree but without integrating it into their presentation. By contrast, Stretton formally recognises that economic analytical tools used, the view of the facts, including causation, and policy positions reached strongly reflect the ideology of the writer. "You will understand many economic arguments and analyses better", he stresses "if you know what values shaped them and what purposes they were designed to serve"[4] and to the student he warns that "you won't know what you are doing if you don't know the part your values play in doing it".[5]

By exposing students to a range of value positions and the link between these values and the analytical tools embraced and the economic policies advocated, they are able to understand the process of thought of a writer and, in doing so, be able to develop a critical approach to their studies of the writings of different economists. This process will help them to discover their own position on contemporary policy issues. Further, he argues that students must not only recognise their own values but be willing to adjust and refine them in the face of perceived changes in the facts: "It is a continuous process of mutual criticism".[6]

Clearly the strengths are considerable, but we need also to reflect on what many subject leaders will consider to be limitations of the book.

While some lecturers may welcome his courage to focus on a comprehensive social science approach, the majority are likely to consider that such a methodology is more relevant to the 1960s than for the students they see in their first-year classes today. As a first-year lecturer I have sympathy for such a view. While there is much in this approach which I will use in my second-year subject on Economic Policy in Australia, a subject in which economic ideology and its relationship to economic policy plays a central role, there are, I fear, few students in my first-year microeconomics subject who have the background knowledge or, sadly, the interest to struggle (which is what most would see it as) through this text. For most of these students this approach is likely to simply reinforce the perception they already have that economics is totally unrelated to their job-driven specialisations. Such a perception is likely to be even stronger among our large and growing number of international students. And, as any departmental head knows these days, we rely on these students for our very fiscal survival.

I am in agreement with his critique of the dominance of a classical liberal or economic rationalist line in many texts and their claim of value-free economics. He laments that there are "an inexcusable number of academic social scientists (who) are still

teaching as 'objective fact' or as 'purely technical theory and analysis' beliefs and methods which are shaped throughout by concealed or unconscious values".[7] Of course, in many cases lecturers are not even consciously aware of what they are doing as they are simply repeating what they, themselves, have been taught by economists who have little or no exposure to the central impact of economic ideology on economic analysis, economic systems and economic policy.

This is clearly not the case with Stretton. So it is a bit surprising that he seeks to replace one dominant view with another rather than provide a more even-handed approach to the rich diversity of views that make up our discipline. Is this a fair critique of his book? Yes it is. Stretton makes it clear (he is very open) that he adheres strongly to social democracy as a political movement with a strong interventionist economic ideology. Thus, while he generally supports the market capitalist economic system, he applies the interventionist cost/benefit method to particular cases including state-owned firms and a wide range of forms of regulation and other forms of intervention. Where he believes the outcome is inconsistent with desired social goals in areas such as unemployment, insecurity, lack of cooperation and participation, environmental degradation, domestic and international poverty and insecurity, he is happy to turn to an actively interventionist government as long as it is operating in an open, democratic society. He firmly believes that the dramatic rise of classical liberalism or economic rationalism in the late 1970s and 1980s has been very damaging for economics as a discipline as well as for the wider community. "The directions of much neoclassical economic theory and of much national and international economic policy through the last twenty years have contributed to absolute poverty and death in some poor countries, and relative poverty and insecurity in such countries"[8] and further, "the resort to deregulation, privatisation and smaller government since the 1970s proves to have been a mistaken response to the new troubles, and an active cause of some of them".[9]

While Stretton is totally open about his methodological and ideological stance, I believe that, if we are to strike a positive note with the present generation of students, we need to adopt a more balanced approach. Students do not want to be told what is or what is not a good hypothesis or correct line on economic policy. To the extent that they are interested in economic events and policies going on around them, they want to be able to understand the obvious disagreements over economic policy and to have a method of thought that enables them to clarify their own position. It is clear to students that economists do not agree on a range of contemporary issues. A glance at the local newspapers reveals a wide disagreement on issues, like privatisation, between regular contributors such as John Hewson, John Quiggin, Alan Mitchell and Ken Davidson. Surely we do not want to tell our first-year students that one or more of these well-trained economists is wrong because their conclusions conflict with our ideology. Students are not going to be attracted to a discipline where they believe that they are being preached to.

One omission from Hugh Stretton's text, which I find rather surprising, is the failure to include two of the most interesting attempts to redefine the interventionist approach of social democratic parties and, in so doing, challenge successfully the classical liberalist or economic rationalist position. The first of these experiments was the consensus approach of Hawke and Keating. This form of interventionism guided much of Australia's economic policy between 1983 and 1996. The second and more recent strategy goes by the name of Third Way. It is associated with Tony Blair in Great Britain and Mark Latham in Australia. Ideologically it is placed between classical liberalism or economic rationalism and what Latham refers to as the "old left" views of social democratic parties in the past. Clearly he would place Hugh Stretton in the latter category. What Latham is arguing is that social reality has changed, being driven by globalisation and the information revolution. Social democratic parties must adjust to these changes or become increasingly irrelevant. Globally mobile capital should no longer be subject to high tax rates and strong regulatory regimes. To do so will undermine wealth and job creation. Interventionist policies should focus on areas such as education and training, infrastructure and social welfare. Even in the area of social welfare he argues that the passive system of welfare, based on the right to support, should be replaced by the principle of mutual obligation. I suspect Hugh Stretton would be quite unsympathetic to such views but it would have been helpful if he had shared them with his readers.

Clearly this is an outstanding piece of work, but does it represent an answer to the challenge we face with the low perception of economics by students and the steadily declining enrolments? While I agree

with Stretton that existing texts tend to be too technocratic and are driven primarily by classical liberalist ideology, I do not believe his approach provides a satisfactory alternative. Why is this so? The book:

* is too long and too difficult to divide up into feasible semester based subjects. Most of us only have one or two subjects in which to win the hearts and minds of our students;
* fails to appreciate the complementary nature of diagrams and some algebra to the learning of economics;
* assumes a broad background of knowledge and interest that, in my view, modern day students in Business/Commerce Faculties do not have;
* is too committed to a particular view of the world which is counterproductive if we are to overcome the negative perception of economics held by our new students. Rather we should teach them a method to help them to understand differing approaches and views and to reach their own conclusions.

If we are to stem the tide flowing against us, we need to develop first-year subjects which are analytical and rigorous but which focus on economics as a service subject for the overwhelming majority of our students who wish to major in accounting and finance, business law, management and marketing. Where feasible, students should be shown the strong links between economics and these disciplines. In this way we can demonstrate to them the critical role that economics plays in a Business/Commerce degree. At the same time, we must appeal to their role in life as a citizen. To achieve this we need to develop a method and a way of thinking that allows them to participate in the great economic issues of the day. In doing this, I agree with Stretton that we must incorporate into our lectures the central role of ideology. However, we must not preach to our students. We have our views; let them work out for themselves what views they wish to hold.

In many ways economics can be the most interesting of all disciplines in the first year of a Business/Commerce degree. To achieve this we must look forward, in line with changes in social reality, rather than back to the past golden age of the 1960s.

ENDNOTES

1. I. Ward, G. Crosling & J. Marangos, 'Encouraging Positive Perceptions of Economics: The Effectiveness of the Orientation Tutorial', *Economic Papers*, vol.19, no.3, 2 September 2000, pp.76–86.
2. H. Stretton, *Economics, A New Introduction*, UNSWP, Sydney, 1999.
3. D. McTaggart, C. Findlay & M. Parkin, *Economics* 3rd edition, Addison Wesley Longman, Melbourne, 1999.
4. Stretton, op.cit., p.58.
5. Stretton, op.cit., p.60.
6. Stretton, op.cit.
7. Stretton, op.cit.
8. Stretton, op.cit., pp.60–61.
9. Stretton, op.cit., p.IX.

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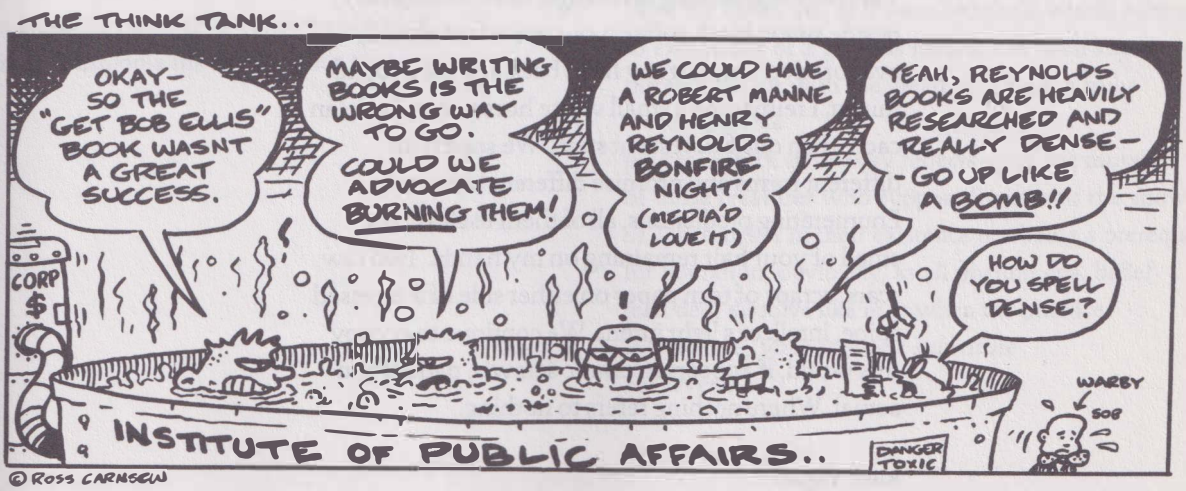


FROM 'CALENDAR'

(JULY)

Holding hands we leap off jagged rocks for a video camera, not needing to communicate our knowledge of why. It will only move forward in disattached places. Calendula, a blue jug, candles and punctual smoke, the slow fret of uneven talk. I reappear with space in my gestures and gather a few things, turning back to gaze along the coastline. Each shudder of metal cites a dark evolution, wallaby ghosting as light drains into a road of gums, one frantic possibility. Indifferent rain buckets down between great washes of sea. We stride toward freesias with the narcissistic joy of equally-matched heights. Shadow of irises, exquisite scapula, angelic pitch in a room of temporary dust, arms out beside the fence, beams as spokes of a giant circus, purple evening, details we might wish for later. The crescent moon patiently regarding haphazard sand. A whale, a star, two names for a present child, twinning temporalities, every retum measured against this one.

(DECEMBER)

Where hail has broken the vast roof a galaxy of stars hangs, noticeable only by day. Deliberately edged and remaining here. A red sign scripting water. Each affirmation of detail is a tracking of context made new. Two eggs spinning in a deep blue bowl. Carefully segmenting an orange, citric astringency beside sweet black coffee, your voice fantastically evaporative. Leaning my head back against a round mirror, I reimagine a small white horse, then Permian cacti, then one fluorescent stem. We search for different forms and promise different habitats. Enumerating predictions, all of them useless. The smell of your hair remaining on my hands. Two raw scars, scraps of tom paper on either side of a caressed spine, intellect's light intent. We continue to occupy this world, it appears in erratic scrawls, patient and actual. Where nothing refers to nothing.

kate fagan

Face

If yours can be substituted for several
you're in business, says my guardian (at my side
like a shadow). But which business? Odds are
that it's dubious. A straw concession, say – selling straws
to those old men kneeling on the riverbank who love
to spend their day sipping muddy water, a kind
of wisdom getting one supposes; or as a vendor
of inflammable pulpits – up in flames as the sermon
comes to a close; or as a shipping magnate – cargoes
of haloes to Sierra Leone, dreadlocks to Outer
Mongolia, ostrich feathers to the Arctic, the ship
crashing through ice, a child's frozen hand
pointing the way to a village where bicycles
are adjusted for human use. Ride
at your own risk. Pitfalls more numerous than mouths
in Ethiopia waiting for food that never arrives. Held up,
as always, by the *Authorities,* in this case a clutch
of bellicose elders exposing themselves to confidence
men in the hope that they'll be selected for *cross-*
chilling, a process similar to cross-dressing, the only
significant difference being that the former takes place
on a cross, the gender switch accomplished before a
crowd
of thousands. In the words of the Virgin: *Let them rise*
to this solemn occasion even if it's only for yet another
publicity shot, paparazzi circling, cameras snapping
like the teeth of hungry wolves. Which gives rise
to the question – are these elders
on a hunger strike? – the answer
a loud *No,* nor is their constituency back
in that Ethiopia that Mussolini's air force
bombed in '35, Bruno, his pilot son, marvelling
at the fiery spectacle, one worthy, surely,
of a Sistine Chapel. Love the way
those bodies fly. God's children
on the move. *Safe journey*
about as applicable as a martyr in aspic
in a confessional, the priest & the client
having somehow switched places, the former gloating
over that boy he'd been a fisher of in '42, a practice
known in the trade as *fingering the beads,* nice work
if you can get it, if you don't
blow the cover, the, as it were, manhole which, subject
to explosions of a gaseous nature, has been known to fly
through the air with the greatest of ease, a truly
abominable
practice which in no way reflects upon the morals
of those creatures who supposedly inhabit the snows
of Tibet, belief in their existence not being a prerequisite
for liberation, obviously, as all phenomena, belief
included, dissolve like mist when the practice
is truly ripe, *your face as a substitute*
for several.

Philip Hammial

Danger

The
wet

black

street

is slick
as licorice

is a
colourfield
painting

licked
by a double-white
line

nicking
the wheels
of skateboards

flicking
downhill

of wheels
of cars

flicking
up.

Frances Rouse

Sydney Biennale – '86

I like America
because America likes me
Joseph Beuys

"I like art
because art likes me"
Who is this man from Germany
with splinters of glass in his pink body
climbing down a tree trunk
looking for? The mystery of art
when art likes everybody.
And to which school
does a grass door between plastic material
lead?
Does a heap of rice
beside a stone
signify something?
Do people love rice
like rice loves people?
Perhaps wooden desks constructed into an arch
have eternal meaning?
Or the pantheon of books which at night
illuminates the people of Buenos Aires.
Certainly a black box in Sydney
and a white box in New York
big enough to house a poor family
is something in an art gallery.
Take your shoes off
ladies and gentlemen
for the fighter planes delicate as birds
because bombs also like art
as perhaps art loves bombs.
In the distance
buddhas of wool
in black, yellow, red
can still smile.
Only the whites
hardly throw a shadow
on the table.

Rudi Krausmann

Found Poem

These hulls are superstructures floating
in a cigar-box paradise. You take your Cuban
neat – no ice. And don't ask what an island
is doing here, amidst all this driftwood luxury.
Playing at hotels, I guess. The maritime boat-
shaped souvenir shop in trance. Or transit.
Taste testing vintage sand in this little bay
of literary pigs. There's something Havana-like
in the way you quickly run over your theme
and reverse, reverse your theme and run over
it again to ensure everything's at least one day's
drive away from your reader. Or capable of
being seen from a distance, tiny characters
swimming in citrus-free water where speed-
boats ride on Jeff Buckley waves. The body
yet to be found, or dragged up from seaweed
floor, further out than in, you land again
on beachside deck. Here, you could be anyone
sipping Singha beer or gin slings watching
a sperm whale making love to a wave, and
would not know its arse from its tail. Direction
is an after-thought just off-shore listening
to ol' Frank's wracked throat announcing
to all and sundry "I Did It My Way" on that
dial-a-voice telephone, the plastic isthmus
grasped firmly between the twin lands of speak
and listen. Just a child who everyone wants
to adopt. After all, *this* could be Istanbul:
near enough, but not close enough, to Mt Ararat.
Just an aerial shot. Ribs of things found
in absurdia, a collection of half-hearted dreams
and disturbed world views from which you wake
to find yourself searching for proof, though
the evidence is just not there.

Richard Hillman

Cormorant fog

All brown and green afloat
gives way to rust
a heavy-bellied cormorant
resting in one final sacred place
the wind caught like a boar in a swell
tries to scale a wave
remember how to move with waves
lift its light-through body like a corpse
come alive with sipping water
rears up into a marvelous shape
a glass sphere for seeing the flotsam
all blown about from inside out
to create a small room of unfillable space
a giant balloon about to implode
while cormorant babies wait
to learn to fly
like a slow, bleak and malodorous fog
with its sharp-headed will set for Cockle Bay

Bev Braune

Erratum

CONGRATULATING *overland* on another excellent edition (no.163) I must however draw attention to an error (not my choosing) in my contribution about New Theatre, Sydney (p.91). Apparently your editor's eagle eyes failed to observe an embarrassing name-change. The phrase "grimy realism" (my article's basic objection) was stated by Joyce Morgan as interviewer in her article, not said at all as printed, by New's Artistic Director, Frank McNamara. Frank must have been horrified to see himself accused of such a statement and I hope this erratum will exonerate myself from that suggestion. Shakespeare's Juliet knew the importance of what's in a name!

John Barnard

The Melbourne Film Festival, 1952–2001

Gerry Harant

IN JULY 2001 the Melbourne International Film Festival published, on the occasion of the fiftieth Anniversary of the event, a slim booklet largely containing comments by outsiders to the Festival.

It is not a history of MIFF's first fifty years. In attempting to see the present MIFF as a direct development of the 1952 Olinda Festival, it has to gloss over the large differences in concept and substance which developed over the elapsed half-century

These differences are not surprising. Times, as the cliché would have it, have changed. Those of us who were there have also got long in the tooth, and perhaps we are a bit one-eyed. You be the judge.

Australia has had a long history as a film-producing country. There is the oft-repeated but incorrect claim that the world's first full-length feature film was made here by the Salvos; more realistically, the period from the end of the First World War up to the beginning of the Second World War saw the making of silent and later sound features which largely followed the Hollywood model. The 1930s marked the beginning of the end for Australian production, as the distribution and exhibition fell into the hands of overseas monopolies. With the distribution chains dominating the scene using restrictive practices banned elsewhere, by the beginning of the Second World War the only screen in Melbourne showing European films was the Savoy in Russell Street. Australia then had the highest density of cinema seats in the world, about one for every seven inhabitants. Yet people seriously interested in films, while catching tantalising glimpses in the numerous cinema journals and books published overseas, only rarely got a chance to see the product.

This was particularly true of the documentary film. This genre had reached a remarkable stage of perfection in the US where there was even a tradition of music written for such films, music which gets airings to this day. Britain, too, had its documentary school. We are talking here about real documentaries, not like the present-day TV 'docos' which frequently are little more than a commentary with images thrown in for good measure. World-wide, documentary film groups attracted many people who saw the future of the film in terms of its educational and artistic values. Some of these groups also existed in Australia.

The person organising the entire movement in Victoria was Ken Coldicutt. Ken not only had studied film widely from books and publications, but spent the late 1930s lugging a 16mm projector around Australia by train to show films in aid of Spanish war relief. He had to organise the screenings and single-handedly fight to get his films through the censor; they were almost invariably banned on arrival in Australia. After all, Germany and Japan were 'friendly' countries, and to suggest that the elected government of Spain should be supported in its struggle against

Franco's clerico-fascist regime was anathema to the British and their Australian toadies.

The experiences acquired by Coldicutt during this time came in handy in later anti-censorship campaigns; he was one of the few people to realise that all censorship is political censorship because it seeks to impose an ideology on audiences. Ken and Bob Matthews decided to start up a film production unit along the lines of a similar UK left group also called Realist Film Unit, which I later joined initially as technician. Its purpose was twofold: to make films with a left perspective; and to show films of value to Melbourne audiences. While we did turn out some short films, it soon became clear that without an exhibition chain there would be no audiences to see them and no money to make them.

Most of our efforts therefore went into organising public screenings of what films were available on 16mm. The problem here was that most of these were not licensed for public screening. We got around this by various ruses such as entry by donation or signing people up for membership at the door. Our venues were public halls all over Melbourne. Literally thousands of people were thus introduced to excellent documentaries and feature films.

Our other main activity was the dissemination of information and material support for fledgling suburban film societies. Ken, together with Betty Lacey (now Elizabeth Coldicutt) who worked at the newly created State Film Centre, organised publicity for our screenings as well as monthly discussions on films at 92 Flinders Street, helped film societies with programming and supplied projection equipment for a pittance. Within a short span of time our membership was around forty activists, who, in turn, gave rise to around a dozen suburban film societies.

Basically, this was a protest movement against the domination of Australian screens by the Hollywood product and against the misuse of what we perceived as a valuable medium. We were not alone. Other societies, notably the Melbourne University Film Society (MUFS) and the Melbourne Film Society, while not as proactive as the Realists, pursued similar aims in more permanent venues.

Problems common to these societies and to other film users led to the formation, in 1949, first of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies (FVFS) and later of ACOFS, the Australian Council of Film Societies. ACOFS, in one of its NSW meetings, decided to spread its wings and organise film weekends on a rotating basis in Australian capitals. Not to be outdone, FVFS ran its own in Melbourne on the Australia Day weekend in 1952. This was the origin of the concept of the Melbourne Film Festival. The practical problems, however, were daunting. No theatrical venue could be hired; Olinda Film Society suggested that we should hold the festival (by now it was called that) in its township, a picturesque village in the hills within easy reach of Melbourne, which boasted not only glorious greenery but numerous guesthouses. This turned out to be a stroke of prophetic foresight. Instead of the expected eighty participants there were eight hundred, stretching Olinda's available accommodation and that of neighbouring townships. Apart from using the local hall as a screening venue, an open-air screen was erected. There was, from memory, a great exhibition of stills and film posters.

The program was equally ambitious. Apart from documentary, teaching and scientific films, organisers managed to get hold of Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*, there was the *Lavender Hill Mob,* Dovzhenko's classic *Earth* and Flaherty's *Louisiana Story*, and an early colour cartoon, probably made by Melies. The Festival was an overwhelming success. Its permanence was assured.

The problems in 1953 were even greater. With the expected increase in audience numbers, a larger venue became imperative, and, in the absence of a proper cinema, the Exhibition Building was chosen. Its upstairs halls provided several theatres which could operate simultaneously. Unfortunately, the cavernous main hall defeated even the innovative people from CSIRO who built a system to delay the sound. The cost of the special fireproof projection box and the rest of the gear contributed to a deficit despite 1800 people turning up. The draughts, echoes and general discomfort turned the valiant effort into a nightmare, and left the organisers £1000 – a lot of money in those days – in the red.

Generously, MUFS came to the rescue by amalgamating their own private festival which had been running for six years,

with this larger but financially embarrassed event, thus saving it from certain extinction. Melbourne University offered not only the well-equipped Union Theatre to show features, but another six lecture theatres on the campus. Over three weekends some fifty-four sessions of short films and discussion programs were held.

From there on the festival did not falter until 1984. Although commercial distributors ignored it even to the extent of not mentioning MFF acclaim in their advertising, this did little harm. Approaching foreign embassies proved highly fruitful and in 1956 thirteen countries participated. Many of these countries had never before had their films shown here. For some years the university remained the main venue; later the success with the public meant more and more theatres became venues.

In 1958, the International Federation of Film Producers (FIAPF) endorsed the MFF. This was a doubtful honour, although it was bestowed on only twenty of the hundred then-existing film festivals. FIAPF's rules restricted the MFF to one only screening of each film and imposed other conditions. Endorsement was, however, required to get French films, and France at that time was one of Europe's most prolific film-producing countries, having shaken off the attempt by Hollywood to stifle its industry under the Marshall Plan.

With hundreds of intending patrons still being turned away, by 1962 a suitable venue was eventually found in the Palais Theatre, Australia's largest, which accommodated 2800 and the adjoining Palais de Danse which was (laboriously) turned every year into a 16mm venue seating around 350. The Palais de Danse was also used for catering. Even then the Palais could only accommodate less than half of the intending audience and two seasons had to be run adding up to over four thousand members.

Yes, we did call them members in those days. Quite rightly so; due to FIAPF and censorship restrictions only season tickets were available, and pre-booking was only available to film society members. It meant, in most cases, that the event was sold out the moment bookings opened. This remained true after 1956 when the advent of TV started to make massive inroads into city and suburban theatres, which closed down by the score.

LET'S PAUSE at this point to analyse why this event became such a phenomenal success within a decade of its inception. For a start, it filled a need. There was a group of aware people, trained by film societies around Victoria, who were fed up with the steady diet of Hollywood. Secondly, it was cheap. Because we ran it as a service to film-lovers, expenses were kept to a minimum. Apart from the director and a minute office staff, boosted by casuals and volunteers during the event, the theatre rentals, program book and sundry office expenses made up the bulk of the cost. By comparison with the Moscow and Berlin festivals which were the only ones to have similar audience numbers, our total budget was around what Berlin spent on accommodating their press contingent. It was ad-free; indeed, we sometimes had to negotiate with theatres to get out of existing slide advertising. Any ads for sponsored films brought boos and hisses from the audience.

It was a *real* festival. Our venues were made to look festive. A great deal of care (though little money) was spent on decorations which had the same theme as the program booklet. There were decorations onstage for the opening and closing nights which also carried the theme of the program cover. Venues were chosen to make the audience feel at home. The intervals allowed the audience to meet socially; the MFF became an event, not glitzy like overseas star-fests but audience and film centred. We went to endless trouble to make screenings technically perfect; the right aspect ratios (a choice of six), careful attention to projection with elaborate remote controls, and careful choice of interval music. We shot an animated trailer with the very appealing MFF logo with music written by Dorian le Gallienne. Volunteer ushers fitted in seamlessly with theatre professionals, and we supplied a film-society-trained theatre manager for each venue.

The most important difference between MFF and oversees competition-driven festivals lay in the films. Because ours was not a showcase for new releases but was culled from the previous year's overseas festivals, the MFF became, in effect, a festival of festivals. Looking through past programs it is astounding

just how representative the MFF's offerings were of the world's best for the particular year. It is also astounding how many first works of film directors which were chosen presaged a later illustrious career for the film-maker.

From 1967 on we also invited film-maker guests, again largely through contacts made at overseas festivals. While such choices were made by the organising committee or a group to whom this selection was delegated, the choices made by the Festival director had a crucial influence.

This was where the Festival's first director, Erwin Rado, came in. Erwin was working as a professional photographer with a studio in Camberwell. He had emigrated from Hungary where he started life working in a bank. Erwin was secretary of the Melbourne Film Society but he gradually set out to organise various other film activities. A residence in Carlton set among rooming houses was rented as an office to become the HQ of the MFF, the Australian Film Institute and house a theatrette. This collective entity was known as the Film Secretariat. Erwin later bought the premises and had his living quarters upstairs. The Melbourne Film Festival was only one of his interests. He was keen on film production, and helped directors in getting their films off the ground. Among his many other involvements, he aspired to become a concert pianist, and on at least one occasion delighted a Festival audience with an offering.

With a central European background and numerous languages at his disposal Erwin represented a fair cross-section of Melbourne's more discerning film audiences. The MFF organising committee, however, had members who studied overseas reports and Erwin's letters were distributed to all of us, while he, in turn, followed up the committee's suggestions in his travels. In retrospect, he chose what he liked and this tended to put a conservative stamp on the Festival with which, however, the Organising Committee did not disagree.

This doesn't detract from his programming achievements. Similarly, in running the affairs of the MFF he didn't work in a vacuum. Without the devotion of his office staff the Festival could not have succeeded. Like many administrators, Erwin found it difficult to delegate authority; however, in this, subsequent directors may well have been a lot worse. And he was largely responsible in setting up procedures for film acquisition and handling which were invaluable.

The reason for my raising this is that the myths which have sprung up around him – that he started the MFF and administered it single-handedly – suggest a conductor unsupported by an orchestra. These myths have come to haunt the MFF ever since, because in looking for a replacement, the board invariably looked for an administrative genius instead of a – possibly part-time – artistic leader. The concept also fosters the idea that a committee cannot run an organisation effectively; all this reinforcing preconceptions dear to adherents of present-day managerialist dogma.

The basic dichotomy besetting the MFF was probably insoluble. As a committee, we operated as amateurs in the best sense, and elitist amateurs at that. We wanted to see the world's most interesting films ourselves, and in so doing devoted much time to getting them here and exhibiting them properly. Often this meant that we didn't actually get around to seeing what we had worked for, while our audiences did. For many on the committee it was good, clean fun. Others had big ideas of expansion, looking enviously at overseas Festivals with massive budgets which would depend on sponsorships.

DURING THE EARLY 1980s serious financial difficulties due to falling audiences led to the FVFS giving up ownership of the MFF, which became a separate entity. The old organising committee had been composed of elected members of the participating bodies. The original proposition that it or something like it should be reconstituted was not followed; instead, the couple of people who had been empowered by the old committee did the job on their own. Erwin was ill, but was later recalled. He had always seen it as the ultimate accolade to shift the MFF into the prestigious (and at that time incomplete) Arts Centre. He and I visited the Arts Centre management in 1983 and negotiated an arrangement in which the Arts Centre would provide all facilities and staff for $60,000, roughly twice the amount we usually paid for venues.

From my point of view as technical advisor the 1984 arrangements were unworkable. The massive technical Arts Centre staff had no experience in film and had left it to the last minute to look for equipment. They had not followed our specifications for projection box construction, instead taking 'advice' from Village Theatres who proposed totally unsuitable then-current commercial theatre equipment for a film festival where each film only runs through the projector once. Not only was presentation lousy, but the new MFF director had dispensed with previewing incoming films resulting, among other horrors, in one of the major films from Spain hitting the screen without subtitles.

The upshot was artistic disaster and commercial ruin. As Erwin was very ill, the venue charge of $120,000 went unchallenged. Over the phone Erwin told me where to find the notes he had made, but the new management was too busy to look for them. After liquidation, the Arts Centre finished up with $60,000 – by poetic justice equal to their original quote.

Today, the MFF looks as you would expect it to look. It has a very large paid staff. Sponsorship occupies a fair slice of the board's concerns. The interests of local distributors are well represented, with many of the highly publicised films hitting the local commercial screens only weeks after their Festival release. There are no venue decorations and little sidebar activity. The list of sponsors is massive. Given its audience figures, it still fulfils a useful purpose. With a Liberal Party Senate aspirant and ex-Port Phillip Commissioner as past Chairman, no-one is going to drag it before the next anti-communist Royal Commission. ("Thank goodness, we got rid of all these heavy 'lefty' subtitled films," he is supposed to have confided to a group of film critics. And what do you think might have been his qualification as the present Chief Censor?)

Unfortunately, the FVFS has not come through unscathed. Once MFF access was virtually restricted to film society members, there was a considerable phantom membership in film societies, people who rarely or never attended society screenings. Nevertheless, the FVFS still supports a film society movement which is increasingly more relevant, particularly in country centres. Organisations such as the Cinematheque still keep film appreciation healthy and tend to be more innovative in their programming.

There is a moral, and it comes at the end of the twenty-five-year MFF Jubilee book preface: "A festival directed by a group of altruistic amateurs is bound to have a different orientation from one created as a show-window for a country's film production" – and its exhibition industry, one may add. After all, the non-commercial film movement and the MFF had a crucial part in the re-creation of Australia's feature-film culture. But that, as a notable author used to say, is another story.

I am indebted to the authors of the twenty-five-year MFF Jubilee book for much of the early history. I also wish to apologise for the many omissions of names of people who were instrumental in creating and maintaining the MFF. One of these days someone will write a more comprehensive history and will give these pioneers their due.

Gerry Harant was the longest serving member of the Melbourne International Film Festival organising committee and later board.

Teeth, Eyes and the Rest

Jessica Bligh

WHEN HE WAS growing up, Frank McCourt had fleas in his bed plus bad teeth, and suffered from red eyes, and his friends and associates had consumption.

What's new? When young, I thought lots of people had those complaints. I know I did. And as for a Mam that preferred ciggies to buying food for the kids, well, I had a bit of that too.

No-one, in this world of dazzling whites, teeth in braces, teeth sparkling from pages of all the women's magazines, of fluoride water and toothpastes by the score, can understand how it was at thirteen years of age, when one of my front teeth broke off right down the middle and I was left with half a tooth, showing my schoolmates the decay I came from; the broken house, the smelling gas main, the toilet that never worked and the landlord in a black suit who was forever wanting to chuck us out into the street. Like in books, where a man stands on a

doorstep with his fist raised, and my family would have to slouch away into the snow (well, it's usually cold when you're evicted!) and my younger sister with thumb in her mouth would drag her teddy bear behind her through the swirling winds.

A new girl in High School, fleas in my knickers, the pair turned inside out each morning because Mum didn't have any fuel for the copper to put on a wash. Well okay, knickers you can get away with because with luck no-one looks down there, but teeth, well, that's hard, especially when I wanted to laugh at the jokes the other kids told me. Dentists were expensive. We didn't use them. The same as Doctors.

For two years I couldn't laugh, just smirk, not open my lips. Try it, see how it goes, stomach wobbling like heck because your mates are telling you rude things about their prey, the teachers and the other kids, and it's impossible to laugh. It had to be held in until someone said, "what's wrong with her?" and blushing, I'd walk away to the washroom.

The other girls in my class had hair that shone in the sun. In the schoolroom, two girls sat in front of me, and their hair fell down over my desk. I watched the white dots among the curly ends of their clumps of hair.

They wore lipstick these girls, for when they came to morning assembly the evidence of it was there from the night before, ingrained in colour cyclamen on luscious lips set amongst the pancake makeup they hadn't had time to wash off. They had boyfriends, big fellows of eighteen and nineteen, and I was thirteen, with rotten teeth, and eyelids that crusted up overnight and carried itchy grit on them all day, and my hair got cut at the barber's when my brother had his haircut, and I could never open my mouth because I had these terrible blackened stumps.

The woman at the writers' meeting says, "That woman in *Angela's Ashes,* that mother, Oh, I could have killed her."

"Why?" I asked. "She did her best."

"Did her best? Buying cigarettes while her children needed food? Oh, come on."

Funny, I hadn't thought of that. For I knew, as kids, we didn't have bananas, oranges, tomatoes or those wholesome things like cheese and milk that made kids grow healthy bones. But my father had his cigs, and his nips of rum on a freezing morning after a night of shiftwork driving a truck. And he had his two-bob each way bet with the SP Bookie, and Mum got to be a chain smoker, while she sat at home and waited and waited for her life to begin, but I thought that was the way it was.

When I went to work, there were women there, young and old, who loved their mothers and fathers. They told me so and I'd go home and think there's something wrong with me because why doesn't anyone talk in my house, the one with the gas bath heater that every time it is lit, blows black gunk out of its innards? Why was there sometimes no smiles or laughter, why did everyone sit in little palls of blackness? Why did we eat in silence? Why did my mother sit at one end of our kitchen table and smoke into space? The overhead light, the electric light bulb, used to hang its lonely, fly-spattered self over my head, and made a circle of light over the six plates and the knives and forks of the Silent Ones who dipped their heads every now and again to shove peas into their gobs, or sliced through the fat juicy snags with the crispy brown ends. Still the smoke curled and hit the ceiling, because the door was shut and the window locked to keep out the air that was fresh.

And in the Sanatorium, year after year, pillows made it soft for my back, temperatures and pulses were taken twice a day, rest period two hours a day, tablets twice a day, walking forbidden but family allowed to visit once or twice a week. I watched a tree outside blowing in the wind, its branches covered in grit that swirled up from the empty road; sometimes the tree bent in sheeting rain that also hit the canvas blinds of our wide-open verandah ward or it stood hazy straight in hot summers that made the beds like ovens. The loneliness and despair broken when mother came to visit and said, "keep your pecker up", and I would have if only I'd known what one was, but I didn't and presumed it must be a Pommie thing because she was one, a Pom, and my father a Scotsman who didn't like to bathe, or swim and when we had been kids, he went to the local Baths with us, and first dipped his toes into the water before going in deep up to his knees, then he bent and splashed the

water from hands to shoulders. When all was ready, he dived below the surface of a Christmas king tide.

When my visitors left the Sanatorium each Saturday, they kissed my forehead, said goodbye and were gone. On special occasions, mainly birthdays, they brought me flowers. Sometimes a touch to my shoulder. A loveless life. I'd sit and watch the other patients, with husbands who hugged their wives, men their girlfriends, men who lingered, to give more hugs and kisses, anything to stall the ringing of the visitors' bell and the delivery of nurse's bed pans.

When I returned home shortly after my twenty-first and having had two major lung operations, I faced a convalescence of over a year doing not much at all; just watching the grass grow in Dad's overgrown garden, or chasing the sun which seemed to only hit our front porch in cold wintertime. The familiar home and family that I had yearned for in the years spent in the bed at the San, had all but disappeared. Where I had fitted in with the twenty-four women patients, at home I was the odd one out.

Waiting for a bus, to sit beside one of our neighbours meant her moving further along to the end of the bus seat leaving me sitting prim and proper, but isolated. "Just catching the sun, dear," she said, "it's a bit too chilly sitting where you are."

As if I was still unclean, might cough, contaminate.

Towards the end, Mam in *'Tis*, wanted to be left alone. My parents wanted the same. I thought that was normal too, the same as fleas, and broken teeth and cast-off feelings.

When I took my father on his final trip to hospital, a nurse brought out his clothing, his trousers, the shirt and the singlet scattered with the recalled tiny pinpoints of dried-up blood from the pesky fleas, and she said, "These are for you," and I replied, "I am not his wife, I am a daughter." As if it mattered. But it did.

Where was my mother? Home having a cigarette, where she continued to wait and wait.

At one of his readings in Sydney, Frank McCourt, in answer to a question about how he felt about his background as a child in Limerick, answered without laying blame, "That was the way it was. We accepted it."

For a child, is there any other way?

Working Class Poetry

We have received a tremendous reponse to Sarah Attfield's letter on working class poetry in the previous issue. Three further responses are printed below and more will be published in no. 165 in which we will be running a feature on contemporary working class poetry.

1. Kerry Leves

"You've come rattling a trunkful of structures saying, here, try this one, perhaps it will fit." – Vicki Viidikas

THE BATCHES of short poetry reviews I write for *overland* implement, I believe, an editorial policy to reach out to a broader reading and writing community than other literary journals. Given that the space allotted to poetry reviewing in Australian newspapers and journals has become extremely limited, this policy has some merit. At least a few books not noticed anywhere else do get noticed here, and their writers get some semblance of a response to their work.

Space in *overland* is also restricted. Every book included in my "roundup" also signifies the exclusion of another, which could be at least as deserving of notice as the one that gets in. Poetry's incessantly interesting; I'd like to notice everything, but it's not possible. My reviewing needs to be highly condensed. My response to Sarah Attfield's book, *Hope in Hell*, was more complicated than the eventual review might suggest – but, writing it, I tried at least to register the complications.

I referred to those English moviemakers – Mike Leigh, Terence Davies – to give a provenance. When I referred to Sarah's poetry as "material", this was because it didn't – despite her insistence on its real-ness – seem fully developed to me. It gave me a stronger feeling of time gently and peaceably remembered than time uncomfortably lived. This has nothing to do with the "material"; it has to do with the rendering of it, the writing. *Hope in Hell* seemed a world away from the tell-it-like-it-is vividness of the Australian working-life anthology *925*, for instance. (I reviewed it in *overland* 159.)

Sarah's poetry seemed

careful, a little muted and yes, wistful, even at times fragile – watercolor sketches, not frescoes or monumental sculptures. The lines I quoted were exceptionally mimetic; much else was not. My trope – "a wistful sketchpad" – was intended to be constructive and convey that the book at least created an emotional mood and a sense of an artist working her material, along with the idea that the work itself seemed sketchy. It's not an accolade, but not entirely disrespectful either.

Sarah complains that the culture she writes about is "a culture [she's] sure Leves had no comprehension of" and maybe there's some justice to the charge, insofar as her milieu is English and I was raised in Australia. The old songs she quotes throughout the book don't carry much emotional weight for me; they conjure a retrospective, even historical, mood. So does the presentation of hard living by scenes or vignettes, as in a series of picture frames. I felt positioned as an onlooker or "detached bystander" as I wrote in the review. Coming from a similar background myself, I found the scenic treatment reductive, and retro, and wanted the poetry to make greater demands, equally on me and on a hypothetical reader who mightn't know at all the kind of poverty Sarah writes about.

I was raised in the Sydney suburb of Balmain, in the 1950s, long before it got gentrified; when it *was* a working class suburb. I lived in a cold water four room semi, scuttled up the yard to the toilet, had my bath on Sunday nights, joined everyone else at the back-lane bonfire on Commonwealth Night, winced when I heard the fights start – the sounds of Cooper louvres getting broken again as dinner-plates or chairs or living human bodies were being chucked around. I lied to armed cops at the front door while the neighbour they were hunting escaped out the back. And, copycat-fashion, I called people 'fucking mongrels', 'cunts' and 'pricks', and places 'shitholes' – metaphors I quote against Sarah's stricture: "Frankly, there isn't much place for metaphor when describing working class life."

I don't suggest these metaphors, in themselves, would necessarily make a good poem. But they could turn up as part of the material of a good poem, as metaphors out of a working class life. Even so, their presences in a poem, or the presence of images such as "unmuzzled pit bulls" and "piss puddles in the lift", aren't, in themselves, necessarily going to guarantee the poem's working class authenticity, or place the poem beyond the ken of "the middle class literary establishment" either.

I don't think poetic language comes in monolithic blocks that can be easily labelled 'working class' or 'middle class'; poetry evolves out of an infinite series of non-legitimated unions, dissolving old boundaries and setting up new ones. Read or listened to against class structures, I think any group or person's habitual language is likely to reveal contradictory usages, paradoxical usages, non-sequiturs and also eloquencies. Presuming that there is *a* 'working class language' is maybe a risk that has to be taken, but it runs into further risks, of over-defining, limiting and schematising – like putting pudding basins on everyone's heads, and cutting around the edges.

Sarah's article, 'Working Class Heroes?', which appeared in *overland* 159 constructed some sensitive, subtle readings of π.o.'s magnificent demotic poetry. However in the same article she managed to be a lot less compelling on Les Murray, tending to rely on statements such as "it is unlikely that the diction of a rural working man would be so simply eloquent" and "Murray fits into one of the categories he claims to be against, that of the intellectual attempting to write for the people." 'Working Class Heroes?' doesn't quite fall into the latter trap – it's too well-theorised – but her outburst against me comes close, presuming to excess.

There are judgements Sarah seems to want to attribute to me that I just didn't make. I didn't write that Sarah's book was: "unsophisticated, unliterary, lacking in metaphor . . . naive, too political, lacking in aesthetics" or "misus[ing] 'standard' English". I didn't mention metaphor at all, or 'standard' English, whatever that is. Whoever said that "working class experience isn't a proper subject for poetry", it wasn't me. Likewise if there is "a denial that poetry can be written in working class language [etc.]", I don't write reviews – or poetry – to contribute to any such denial. Finally, when Sarah tries to align my specific remarks about her book

with "establishment . . . criticisms levelled at . . . Aboriginal poetry, or migrant poetry" she draws an offensively long bow and shows she hasn't read some of my previous reviews. So much for words not written, ideas not entertained, and a one-hundred word 'marginalisation stratagem' (ah, the power, the power!) that, in this case, wasn't.

2. Maurice Strandgard

WORKING CLASS all of my life and a poet of somewhere about forty years I would like to discuss some of the points mentioned in Dialogue's 'Working Class Poets'.

I must confess at the outset that I have not read Attfield's *Hope in Hell*, but it is not the book so much as the statements made that concern me. Take "Is it because I haven't used metaphor? Frankly, there isn't much place for metaphor when describing working class life." That would come as somewhat of a surprise to say Philip Levine, Miguel Hernandez or any one of the thousands of working class poets who have used metaphor as an essential part of their poetry.

A word used in the next sentence possibly gives a clue as to what Attfield has against metaphor. She says "constructed metaphor". I suggest that a poet does not construct metaphor; in searching for the most complete means of expression a metaphor comes to the mind; it is not constructed.

"Working class poets often find their work described (by middle class critics) as unsophisticated, unliterary, simplistic . . . and therefore not real 'poetry'." In a great many cases the middle class critics (even making allowance for their latest pretentious fad such as deconstructionism) are right. It is such a shame. The capitalist system has destroyed so much in us of what it is to be human, yet here, within our grasp, through an understanding of poetry, we share the emotions of others and even though we are 'wage slaves' remain undefeated.

3. Michael Farrell

WORKING CLASS formation and rural isolation are mixed. while the bush, animals, knowing everyone and their history were taken for granted, expectations of career and education weren't.

Living where culture was sport, church, tv and reader's digest. there was no big town down the road. there was no picture theatre and no classes in art, music, drama or languages (except, luckily, english) at the school. where no one knew who freud, brecht, warhol or [ ] were. in english we read four poets: shakespeare, donne, coleridge, and eliot. contextless they had little effect.

When i went to canberra cae at an old 21, i'd little concept of art, literature, poetry or concepts. by a series of accidents they began to form. writing with such ignorance made 'breaking' rules impossible. it meant accepting the authority of writers i liked: stein, cummings, burroughs.

Excluding metaphor (and other limitations) has appeal for me, an intellectual position influenced by cage and lars von trier. working class poetry, as it isn't known, is full of fancy and self-mockery. perhaps the revolution is that changing.

overland 161

Dear Sir,

I'm afraid I'm staying a "lapsed subscriber" [in response to your letter requesting a re-think].

Umpteen articles with anti-police bias and no mention of the worthy billionaire Billington, the stench behind Seattle, Melbourne, Genoa etc.

I suspect Stephen Murray-Smith may be rotating in his grave at such attempts to prevent freedom of speech.

Yours sincerely,

Dr John Birrell ISO
OAM MBBS FRACP
LLD (Monash Hon)
[Police Surgeon, retired]

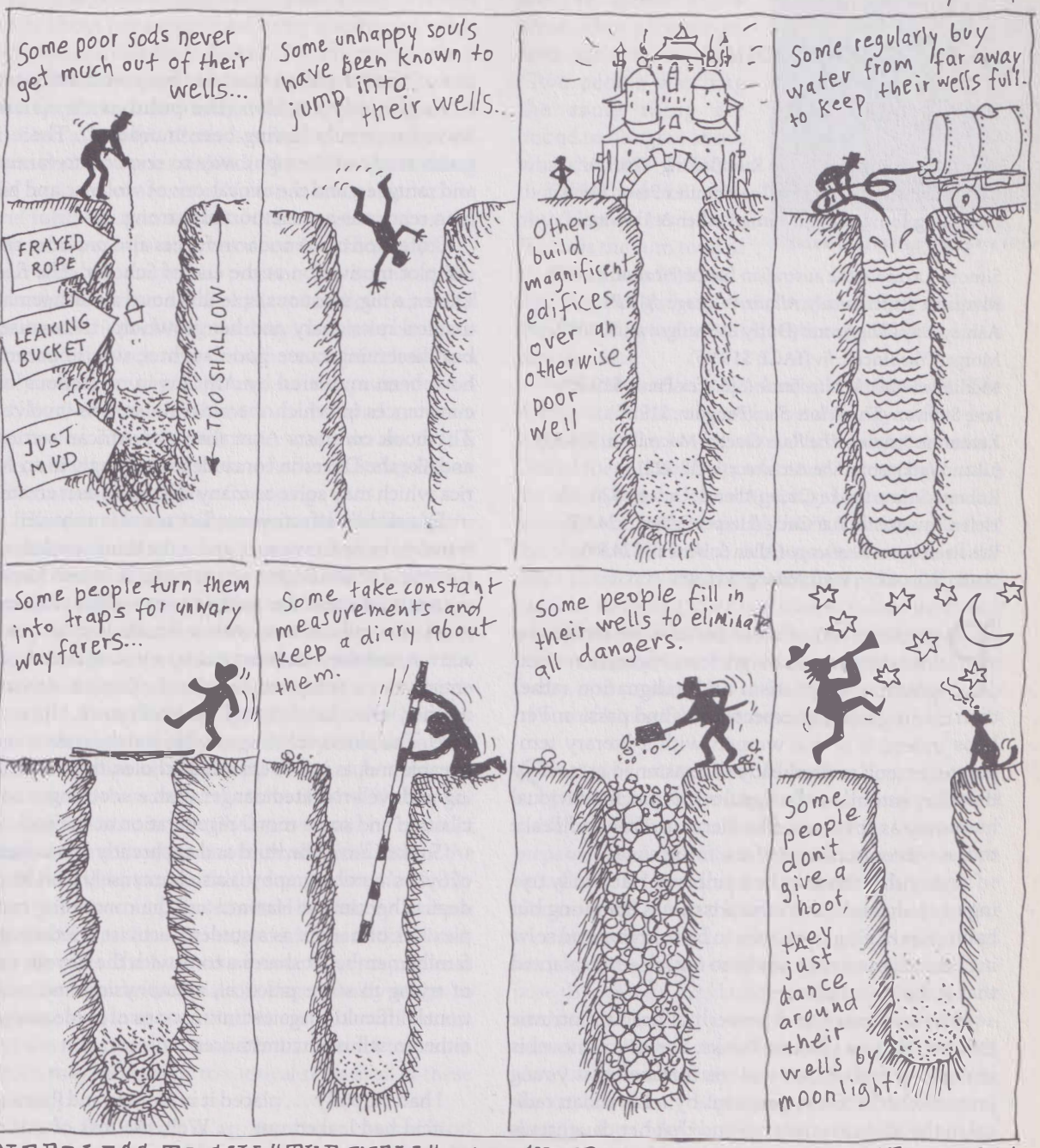
Floating Fund

WE HAVE BEEN overwhelmed by the level of support (financial and moral) over the past few months. *overland* would sincerely like to thank all of the following:

$3000 anon, anon; $1000 anon; $100 G.McD.; $75 J.L.; $64 J.H.; $30 K.J.S.; $24 J.S., J.G.B., F.S.; $22 D.&R.D.; $20 M.H., K.S.O.; $14 M.S., E.M.R., M.W., R.R.S.G.; $12 V. O'D., R.O., N.M.G.; $10 G.P., D.M.C.M., D.J.O'S.; $8 T.S., J.P., K.B.; $4 J.B., J.F., R.E., J.J.R.; $2 M.J.L.: Totalling $7567.

The Well

Variations on a Theme by Lofo



NEEDLESS TO SAY, "THE WELL" IS A SYMBOL FOR WHAT THE GERMANS CALL: GOTTESSEELENKREATIVDAMPFSCHIFFGEBRAUCHSANWEISUNG

Conflict Diamonds

Jennifer Maiden

Anne Deveson: *Lines in the Sand* (Viking, $26.95).
Cathie Dunsford: *Manawa Toa* (Spinifex Press, $19.95).
Hsu-Ming Teo: *Love and Vertigo* (Allen & Unwin, $18.95).
Simone Lazaroo: *the australian fiancé* (Picador, $24.92).
Margaret Scott: *Family Album* (Vintage, $19.70).
Ashley Hay: *The Secret* (Duffy & Snellgrove, $32.95).
Morgan Yasbincek: *Iiv* (FACP, $19.95).
Merlinda Bobis: *White Turtle* (Spinifex Press, $19.95).
Jane Sullivan: *The White Star* (Penguin, $19.95).
Katherine Scholes: *The Rain Queen* (Macmillan, $24.92).
Jillian Watkinson: *The Architect* (UQP, $28).
Roberta Sykes: *Snake Circle* (Allen & Unwin, $24.95).
Helen Townsend: *Full Circle* (HarperCollins, $24.95).
Rosaleen Love: *Reefscape* (Allen & Unwin, $24.95).
Nadia Wheatley: *Vigil* (Viking, $17.95).

PERHAPS IF ANY of these books were written by men they would have left an impression of exposition, dogmatism and indignation rather than investigation, unexpectedness and passion. Perhaps indeed it is that women with a literary temperament tend to be already so chastened by society that they automatically signal out as much individual humanity as they can, like Pierre in *War and Peace* to the officer in charge of the firing squad.

Potentially, this may be a problem. Habitually trying to study and solve ethical issues is liberating but habitually having to be seen to be studying and solving ethical issues may not be so useful – even granted that it did save Pierre.

War and peace and power politics are intrinsic themes in most of these books. Deveson's novel is concerned with Africa and the fortunes of a young journo who becomes pregnant by a Rwandan radical in the mid-seventies, to find that her daughter is caught up in the Rwandan genocide two decades later. In the process, their wise old journo friend is sacrificed in the rescue ("Hannah looks down and she knows that her loss is huge. Such strange journeys they made together, through such momentous times.") and there is a tentative but emotionally satisfying family reunion (the politician's official Rwandan family having been murdered). There is much study of the right way to respond to famine and refugees, and the evocations of violence and human reactions are memorably strong.

Protection of Rwandan refugees also provides crucial plot motivation at the end of Scholes' *The Rain Queen*, a big, sensuous, splendid novel about a female medical missionary and her grown-up, traumatised but discerning nurse god-daughter, whose parents have been murdered by Africans in mysterious circumstances in which the older nurse was involved. The book contrasts Australian and African settings and like the Deveson concludes satisfyingly in an Africa which may solve as many dilemmas as it creates.

Dunsford's effective conflict novel is subtitled its translation, *heart warrior*, and is the third novel about Cowrie, a Maori Rights activist who sails into French waters to protest the nuclear tests on the Muroroa Atoll. She falls in love with a female English peace activist and they are betrayed by a young French scientist who is really working for the English activist's mother, who has become an intelligence officer in Paris. The plot is very improbable and the style is very likeable and, as in Deveson and Scholes, there is exciting and well-narrated danger with a soothing reconciliation and some moral regeneration at the end.

Snake Circle, the third and apparently last volume of Sykes' autobiography is also immensely likeable. It depicts her time at Harvard and the continuing complexities of her life as a student, activist, mother and family member. It shares a tone with the novels; that of trying to solve practical, metaphysical and emotional difficulties against intimations of inadequacy – either in self or circumstances:

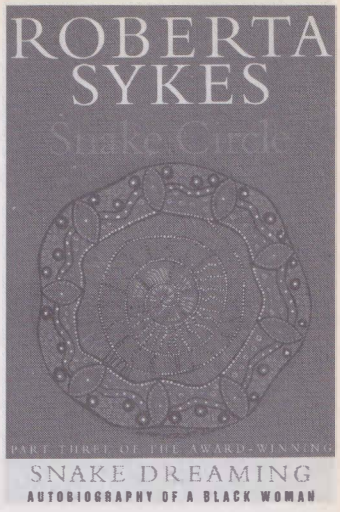
> I had stupidly . . . placed it in storage and [battery] acid had leaked out . . . Well, the loss of my recorder looked like it could turn my whole mission into a major disaster, and I had no funds . . . Luckily Neville produced one for us to use, but I remained worried about how I would cope for the rest of the trip.

People around Sykes tend to be characterised as either rescuing, or angry and misunderstanding. Sometimes it is political development situations which unnecessarily arouse their prejudice, but even Germaine Greer attacks Sykes' poetry, and becomes huffy about her experthood being questioned when Sykes timidly defends herself. For the record, if my experthood on poetry is acceptable, I think Sykes' poetry (not included in this volume) is just fine.

Scott's *Family Album* is subtitled *A novel of secrets and memories* and indeed it is: finally revealing the fatal consequences of Victorian sexual hierarchies and furtiveness in a plot which concentrates on the past and perhaps at times doesn't sufficiently connect it to the emotional present. Nevertheless, the atmosphere created is like that of a Victorian novel (or evena Sherlock Holmes story). It shows how passion and the lack of it contribute to 'accident' in a truly macabre way. How-not-to-react, when-to-react, how-to-cope, how-not-to-be-trapped are again the issues. There is even a prescient dream in this one, but it is a little unclear whether it is there as an effect or as an example of warning.

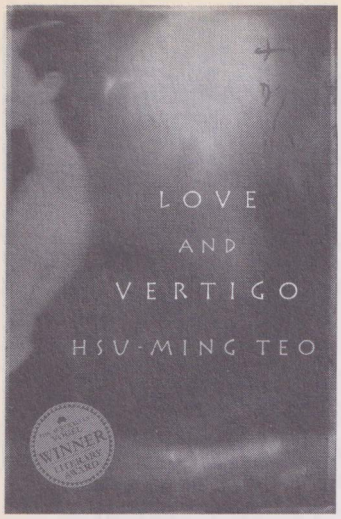
There are secrets in Lazaroo's sad and lovely *the australian fiancé*, too.This one is subtitled *A novel about desire, flight and the aftermath of war*. This whole explanatory subtitling tendency, by the way, is a useful handle for reviewers but I wonder if it might not limit the artistic scope somewhat for the reader? Anyway, Lazaroo sets her story in Singapore and Australia in 1949, and shows how her sensitive narrator is finally expelled by the sexual and racial prejudice of the family of her title character. The narrator's secret is that the child with her, her ostensible sister, is actually her own as the result of imprisonment in a Japanese brothel. At the time of the child's death by accidental (or somehow emotionally reactive) drowning, the narrator has finally become capable of great love for her, and it is this which broadens the plot. The analysis of Australian prejudices is effective as is the fact that the fiancé finally seems to make some small transcendence of his own. At the end the narrator survives with that wistful tolerance which may be intrinsic to survival skills in all of these volumes.

Hay's *The Secret* is an absorbing biographical essay arguing that the reason Annabella Milbanke left Lord Byron after a year of marriage was probably that she thought he'd had an incestuous child with his half-sister Augusta. But this was probably not the case and there is some evidence to suggest that Annabella actually didn't think it was the case until much later. The book's real thesis is that we can never know what other people's secrets are and, anyway, "Two people watching the same thing are bound to disagree about what they see." The relativity method of biography (Hay quotes Rilke's "Fame is the sum total of all the misunderstandings that can gather around one name") again lends itself to using wary, self-questioning tolerance as a survival tool.



Perhaps similarly, Watkinson's vivid novel *The Architect* combats the exclusive ontology of first-person narrative by having several first-person narrators. One of these is her hero, a famous architect-genius in the old style (of architect-genius, I mean, not architecture) who had previously been a photographer in the Vietnam War. Such is his power that one of the other characters somehow experiences bits of his actual life, including a serious road accident involving terrible burns. It is this accident which enables the hero to expand his being into acceptance of human frailty and continue his work after the heroin death of one of his half-Vietnamese children.

SULLIVAN'S NOVEL *The White Star* depicts a sympathetic married mother's slow discovery that her old school chum – who has made a fortune from beauty preparations – is now the witch leader of a one-woman sect which brainwashes and tortures little girls. The climax comes when the central character's daughter is chosen as the next, well, Chosen and mum drags her out of there, at last choosing to go public and expose the whole weird business. The evocation of the sect's activities has the convincing combined creepiness of a coven and a girls' boarding school (the latter always a lot more scary) and the final escape back to the nuclear family is genuinely comforting in comparison. A parallel between the sect and the beauty preparations may be made implicitly, I wasn't sure – and if it is made, I'm not sure whether it is justified in the context. The messages against delusional self-confidence, mysticism and the appetite for power, however, are clear.



As well as being a superbly written novel, Townsend's *Full Circle* is a problem-solver's paradise. The persona, Libby, is a half-Chinese Australian girl who overcomes illiteracy, cultural difficulties, one of literature's most ill-intentioned (yet not demonised) aunties and her boyfriend's preconceptions about art and women:

> Occasionally he and I brave a brisk wind together, and sail, just the two of us, to the far side of the lake. He is reconciled to the lake, which he has found fiercer and more moody than he anticipated.

The property on the lake has been left to Libby by her indelibly individual Chinese grandmother. There is nothing one-dimensional or didactic in all this. Libby is idiosyncratic, authentic, stubborn and sexy. The sub-characters, including her mother, are also particularly well portrayed, with much complex dignity. It would be a mistake to think that its careful solutions make this a minor novel. The hopefulness is that of Dickens or Tolstoy, not the dreadful how-to-cope-and-meditate-with-a-better-attitude authors some publishers so lucratively push.

Tsu-Ming Teo's novel is also engrossingly about the Chinese in Australia. It concentrates on the life and death of the persona's mother and speculates on the context and reasons for her suicidal leap from a Singapore high-rise after returning there from a life which contained a little happiness – often while shopping and occasionally while with the narrator's controlling father – in Australia. Anti-female Chinese cultural traditions are exampled, as is sexual exploitation by a religious humbug. The narrator's anger with her father is at last tempered by acknowledging his remorse and humanity (he has been presented as a separate and rather sympathetic character earlier in the novel): "maybe this is all we can ever do: make up to the living our debt to the dead".

Love's *Reefscape* is subtitled *reflections on the Great Barrier Reef* and is a mixture of facts, anecdotes and opinions ("The very concept of 'charismatic megafauna' is a step in the right direction: it recognises that perceptions matter in zoology as in life"). She outlines the history of the reef, details its past and current ecological and cultural dangers and weighs up likelihoods and solutions:

> Once I thought of the Great Barrier Reef as a world-famous wonder of nature . . . Now I've come to understand the reef in more political terms. In taking a reef and reef waters as a common heritage, the move has been from nature to politics . . . the notion of reef, the biological entity, folds into the notion of reefscape

This becomes, in essence, international and spiritual, thus giving scientific study and conservation a boost as well. This is a self-questioning, crowded, careful and vividly discursive attempt to cope with a multifaceted specific magnificence which has multifaceted specific problems.

In Wheatley's fine young-adult novel *Vigil*, the hero comes to terms with the heroin deaths of his two friends. The process involves revealing larger and larger slices of memory until he and the reader confront the full truth. There is earlier suspense in which the three are trapped and escape in the old house where the two will eventually die. As he begins to accept his maturing process, there is a sense of release for the hero, an intensified relationship with a girl and perhaps intimations of afterlife, as suggested by unsettling and evocative imagery and the sensual discernment of a dog scenting out the boys' unobliterated physical traces.

Bobis' *White Turtle* is a skilful, unusual and energetically symbolist collection of short stories. The surreal is used memorably as metaphor for social protest. In one story, a Philippine's abnormally long hair is used to net corpses from a river until the day she has to retrieve the remains of her deliberately stereotypical Australian lover. Hearts can be physical entities in these stories and the white turtle of the title is a real one which fills a room after its translator has described its function to ferry the dreams of the dead. There are powerful and realistic Philippines settings in most of the stories and the emotional and economic details are poignant and give tragic resonance to the symbolism, which as a result becomes a tool of explanation, analysis and sometimes ribald, didactic humour rather than self-conscious experimentation.

Yasbincek's *liv* is another strong aftermath-of-war novel. Her attractive central character, Olivia, grows up in Cold War Australia but her family and history are Croatian and her consciousness is partly formed

by their experiences, even those of which she is unaware. The narrative mixes her viewpoint with theirs, which includes domestic and political madness and violence. The Croatian culture is presented as gruelling and prejudiced but so is the Australian:

> . . . she shakes him until his face is red and his teeth are ready to crack from banging together. Children talking too much have to go to the front of the class and eat chalk. Sister Hilda once held Simon Hegney out the window and tipped a bucket of water over his head for splashing another child at the taps. All these punishments are meted out in the sing-song tones of jovial humour . . .

Much of the Croatian horror (including the repeated deaths of young children) is due to rural poverty, straightforward lunacy or contagious disease. The Australian horror is more sadistic, hypocritical and potentially avoidable at the time. The growth of Olivia and her spiteful and ultimately political and mysterious sister is well depicted, and the book satisfies very well in terms of cultural accuracy, human psychology and literary style.

LOOKING BACK OVER this random selection of recent female writing, I am impressed with the literary skill and the survival sensibilities it reveals but still uneasy that editorial or social pressure on those who mean well to appear well-meaning may be more inhibiting for women than for men. I had a feeling that some of the available creative energy here was still being channeled into side-stepping preconceptions about the female writer, as if in general our literary feminism was still at the Black Rights stage of Sidney Poitier not Eldridge Cleaver. It can be argued, of course, that a soul still on ice can provide diamonds of strategic and useful compression.

Another interesting feature of many of these works is their detailed direct descriptions of violence and damage. The suicide in *Love and Vertigo* is the most explicit high-rise suicide I've read since that in Marianne Faithfull's excellent autobiography, and the depiction and discussion of hanged bodies early in the Deveson almost distracts from the rest of the book.

Violence in these volumes is usually not the work of the persona, but something the persona needs to outwit, confront, solve or understand – all of which is highly desirable, but may at times lead to a feeling of incompleteness in the central characterisations. It is worth considering whether revulsion against criticism of female personae by women writers in the Victorian novel has led at times to a potentially narrow form of feminism which reverts to the male Victorian novel form of woman as confused victim or earnest and idealistic paragon. Once again, one is reminded of Nye Bevan's observation that "The Labour Party has too much reverence".

Apart from its valid propaganda purposes, insistent artistic violence sometimes results from intimations of lack of intimacy in other artistic areas and it may be also worth considering whether the power these descriptions give the writer over the reader does not to some extent compensate for what may be still a sense of powerlessness or limitation in ethical scope when needing to reveal character.

Self-questioning in these works does not always transcend attractive self-deprecation and hone itself into those skills which not only survive the violence of the world but the violence of the inherited and conditioned self. They are all ultimately, however, part of that process and undoubtedly admirable additions to it.

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Nor do they Mildew with Age

Pam Skutenko

Dorothy Hewett: *A Baker's Dozen* (Penguin, $19.99).

MY FATHER was a baker. I thought I'd come at Dorothy Hewett's thirteen-to-the-dozen the way I used to sneak bread rolls off his oven trays in the morning – before anything else hit my palate. I skipped the author's introduction. Five stories in, I arrived at 'Joe Anchor's Rock'.

The first paragraph brought the tingle of expectation I know when theatre lights dim:

> It was raining hard the day my grandmother told me the story of Joe Anchor, curled up in her big brass-knobbed bed, the salted hams swaying from the jarrah beams over our heads, the wind rattling the corrugated iron and swishing the rain-wet fig trees against the walls.

I knew this place.

I'll come back to Joe Anchor. First, I want to call up the opening story. 'Joey' is told in the voice of a child tossed on the wake of his parents' estrangement. The little boy is in bed when he sees the taut lines of his mother's body return after a last ditch attempt to save her marriage:

> "Did you see Daddy?"
> A long pause. "Yes, I saw him."
> "What did he say . . . "
> He had crawled out of the bedclothes and was anxiously hovering beside her, his little face pressed against her side, as if he wanted to take some of her grief into his own narrow shoulders.

'Joey' doesn't flow with the effortless rhythm of Joe Anchor, and the story ends with an abrupt reconciliation that's too short on explanation to satisfy the narrative. They're three stories apart and I wondered whether this cagey little volume was charting its author's development.

Crafting achieved critical status during the century of techno-science that propelled us into this one. Electronic reproduction advanced the accuracy of instrumental performance beyond anything Beethoven imagined. Anxious not to be swept aside by the success streaming from scientific methodology, the rest of the Humanities embraced 'rigour' with the energy of a measles epidemic. Masters' courses in 'creative' writing broke out in universities.

During a concert tour late last century, a venerable Russo-American virtuoso remarked on the ubiquity of technical proficiency. Nobody played wrong notes any more. It took the courage of a Luddite to deliver his addendum: there'd been no increase in the proportion of great musicians. The gain was measured in immaculately boring performance.

On this note I return to 'Joey'. When its mother is distressed, a child's fragile grip on the world disintegrates. Using Joey's voice, Dorothy Hewett fuses the child's helplessness onto the mother. The poignancy of her emotional crisis is excruciatingly intensified.

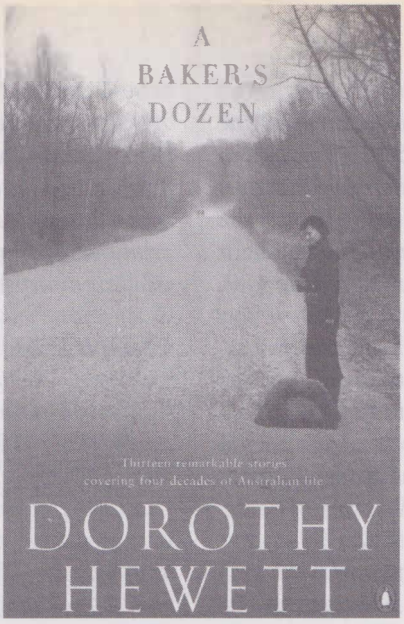
In the lyrical Joe Anchor, his wife's story sweeps an ocean from "the rushing streams . . . swollen with snow" of her New Zealand birthplace, across the Australian continent to the great stretch of the Nullarbor Plain and beyond. The sweeping physical landscape of 'Joe Anchor's Rock' is in tandem with the expanse of the central character's emotional journey. Abandoned by her husband, she leaves the house at night, seeking the owner of a man's singing voice:

> . . . she took a loaded rifle and the dog, and walked down through the orchard . . . sap rising in the young trees. Her hand on the red kelpie's hackles, she stood silent as a shadow under the twisted wattles, heavy with blossom, by the orchard fence.

A loaded rifle in her hand instead of a man lying beside a young woman in her bed. Taste the bitterness of Rachel's loneliness? Sap rising reminds our blood, without the strain of mental activity, of the surge of sexual desire. She's afraid: "hand on the red kelpie's hackles"; resigned, yet cognisant of her dilemma of conscience: "silent . . . under the twisted wattles . . . heavy with blossom".

Almost forty years before its delivery, I felt *The Toucher* stirring in the watery tragedy of Joe Anchor's selfishness. The erotic intensity in the writing compels us to understand the force impelling this woman from the place where she's left her children sleeping. Its sophisticated prose may have been acquired. Not so the implicit metaphor manufacturing the eroticism and the mystical sense of *The Toucher*, nor the selection of voice responsible for Joey's mother's anguish. Creative decisions are intuitive.

Stories are the most powerful means we have to know ourselves as part of a continuing human experience. It's of no consequence that 'Joe Anchor's Rock'



is older than 'Joey' by less than ten years. Whether the individual stories in *A Baker's Dozen* are delivered in lyrical prose or with an anecdotal terseness present in some of them, the author's creative mind – the "heightened sensibilities" Wordsworth believed were the precinct of the poet – leads her to each decision she takes.

Dorothy Hewett's selections for *A Baker's Dozen* provoke a knowledge of ourselves as certainly as my father's bread rolls nourished his customers' bodies. At the naive end of a century whose promise is for an increasing technological distance from the seaminess of flesh, the status of creative imagination has never been more critical to literature.

Pam Skutenko is an ex-screenwriter turned novelist. She studied pianoforte and sculpture in Sydney, and took degrees in Behavioural Science and Education after settling in Melbourne.

Santamaria's Movement

Robert Corcoran

Bruce Duncan: *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (UNSW Press, $49.95).

THE TITLE REFERS to the Movement and its leader for over fifty years, B.A. Santamaria. Early in the book, the author comments on the difficulty of being clear and fair about "the tragedy of the Split in the Australian Labor Party and the Church in the 1950s". These words could have made an alternative title and his comment gives an insight into the attitude of the author, Dr Bruce Duncan. He is a Catholic priest of the Redemptorist Order, a scholar, and the author of an earlier book dealing with Church history and Catholic social thinking.[1]

Crusade or Conspiracy? is a substantial work and breaks new ground. The main text extends over some four hundred pages and is supported by 2200 endnotes. It will endure as a rich source of information and ideas for all those interested in Australian political history and in the difficult question of the appropriate relationship between religion and politics. The book should become an acknowledged reference work and a touchstone for checking other material dealing with Santamaria, the Movement, the Labor Split and the related troubles within the Catholic Church.

The author searched archives and documents in different parts of Australia, conducted dozens of interviews and discovered significant new evidence. Santamaria gave one interview but was unwilling to discuss the more controversial matters, nor would he accept the author's invitation to comment on draft chapters of the book.

Duncan gives accounts of events and interpretations from a wide range of people and indicates the sources of the information and comments. This enables readers to make their own assessments of reliability. The character of the writing is calm and factual and the author seldom expresses a personal opinion except in his substantial conclusion.

The book has four main parts. The first deals with the historical circumstances that set the scene for the main story. It refers to the Papal encyclical of 1891, *Rerum Novarum* (which Duncan elsewhere describes as the "workers' charter") and the development of Australian Catholic social thought between the two World Wars. The influences affecting Catholic attitudes included the aftermath of the First World War, religious differences, the effects of the Depression of the 1930s and, very significantly for Catholics, the rise of communism.

Part II deals with the Cold War and communism, especially its strength in Australian trade unions in the 1940s and the problems it presented to the Curtin and Chifley governments. It includes the activities of the ALP Industrial Groups and their relationship with the Labor Party and the Santamaria Movement.

The third part deals with the events of the Labor Split and differences within the Catholic Church over the status and activities of the Movement. Most of the Bishops throughout Australia took sides in the controversy, with those in Melbourne and Sydney being the main opponents.

In Part III Duncan also discusses the question of whether Santamaria aimed to gain control of the Labor Party. He quotes from a 1952 memorandum to Archbishop Mannix from Santamaria, who writes that this is his aim, and who goes on to assure the Archbishop that he can ensure that a future Labor government will pass legislation in accordance with "a Christian social programme".

Duncan emphasises the significance of Santamaria's paper 'Religious Apostolate and Civic Action', in which Santamaria advocated direct church intervention in politics. It was presented at a Movement 'summer school' in 1953 and a version of it was printed in the Bombay Catholic paper *The Examiner* in 1955.

The continuing differences within the Church over the control and appropriate activities of the Movement are discussed in Part IV. The controversy was eventually referred to the Vatican authorities and the judgement from Rome in 1957 went against Santamaria and the Melbourne group by deciding that the Movement could not continue its activities in its then-current structure. Santamaria defied the judgement from the Vatican and the Movement continued, with the support of some bishops, particularly in Victoria, while other bishops, including those in Sydney, welcomed and accepted the ruling.

The book explains the tactics Santamaria used to maintain his control of the Movement. He was the real leader despite the formality of the control by the Bishops from 1945. The manoeuvres are too complex to describe in a few words but it is noteworthy that Santamaria reversed his stand on an alleged major principle – the Movement's status in relation to the Church – when circumstances suited his own purposes to do so.[2]

Crusade or Conspiracy? shows Santamaria was deeply convinced of the correctness of his beliefs and seemed unable to accept or even consider criticism. This led him to adhere to outlandish policies – particularly his vision of an integrated Church/State government – and to put them into effect by political means, culminating in legislation.

The title – *Crusade or Conspiracy?* – poses a question to the readers. From the evidence, and using similar metaphorical terms, it appears likely that Santamaria saw himself as a Christian knight, leading a Crusade whose high purpose justified its conduct whatever the cost. Also from the evidence, it is clear that Santamaria had a secret plan to take control of a political party. Critics of the Movement would call this 'conspiracy'.

Whatever conclusions individual readers may reach, Bruce Duncan has provided a book with an enormous amount of information about an important phase of Australian history, and also about the relationship of religion and politics – a subject that is of current worldwide significance.

ENDNOTES

1. Bruce Duncan, *The Church's Social Teaching: from Rerum Novarum to 1931*, CSSR, CollinsDove, 1991.
2. A diagram at the beginning of the book shows the many changes in official names and status of the Movement.

Robert Corcoran is a political writer based in Melbourne and the author of The Longman Dictionary of Politics, Civics and Environment.

Licensed by God

Brian Beasley

Paul Ormonde (ed.): *Santamaria: The Politics of Fear* (Spectrum Publications, $25).

IN RECENT YEARS, a tide of media opinion has attempted to canonise the late B.A. Santamaria in the Australian consciousness as something of a political or holy relic. Many on the left have either forgotten or forgiven his early Fascist tendencies and destructive anti-communist paranoia. And although Santamaria has always been in favour on the right, his apologists, Archbishop George Pell and his holiness Tony Abbott, have been part of an effort to erase the memory of his Machiavellian tactics and surreal prophecies. *Santamaria: The Politics of Fear* is an attempt to resist this current of opinion. It restates the case for why Santamaria deserves to be toppled from the pedestal he now appears to share with Mannix (unless Mannix has already been promoted to Sainthood).

The contributing writers frequently refer to Pell's panegyric at Santamaria's state funeral, in which he pronounced that Santamaria "knew the attractive force of the principle that the end justifies the means. But he resisted this". Each of the contributors has direct experience of Santamaria's ruthless and devious tactics, largely through their own connection

with the *Catholic Worker* (1936–76). The *CW* was, from the mid fifties until its ban by the bishops, the lone site of Catholic resistance to the orthodoxy of the Movement.

Each chapter of *Santamaria* exposes Bob's litany of deceit. Perhaps his greatest deception, however, was the way in which he effectively obscured his true beliefs. There is a fundamental continuity in Santamaria's political thinking which stretches back to his early enthusiasm for the Fascistic corporate state, inspired by the papal encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI, Mussolini, Franco and Action Francaise. Although this is not clear to all the contributors, Paul Ormonde argues that Santamaria never really lost his conviction that civilisation was collapsing – a belief he attempted to prove through erroneous historical comparison and biological metaphor. It was Santamaria's obsession that only a return to medieval agrarian theocracy, somewhat in the style of De Valera's Ireland, could redeem civilisation. He even attempted to invent a peasant heritage for himself. The reality is that his origins had more in common with Margaret Thatcher – both were children of a shopkeeping petit-bourgeoisie.

His romance with medieval Catholicism, however, had a fraught and often contradictory relationship with his aggressive support for American imperialism, which he promoted as an antidote for communism. His political ideal had a reactionary anti-capitalist component that he tactfully obscured for fear of seeming to identify with the enemy. Santamaria's posturing about the sanctity of Liberty and Freedom was mere anti-communist window dressing for his grander vision of Bog Catholicism. Increasing numbers of upwardly mobile Catholics were redefining their class allegiances in the 1950s and sixties, and found ideological resonances in the bourgeois reactionary consciousness of Movement politics. Any progressivism was seen as embryonic communism, and consequently many anti-communist socialists and liberals became casualties of the Movement's crusade. This included the then moderately leftist ALP, which the DLP kept from government for twenty-three years through preference deals with the conservatives.

Santamaria was never a member of the DLP nor any other organisation that he did not control. In *Against the Tide* (1981) Santamaria explained that the basic objective of the Movement was to use CPA means (including fronts) for radical Catholic ends. The Movement's hold on the Victorian ALP was used to further, by stealth, the National Rural Catholic Movement, which aimed to implement Santamaria's social vision and put millions of Catholic migrants into close-settled bucolic bliss.

Following his celebration of the Fascist military victory over Spanish democracy, Santamaria spoke at a peace rally in 1939. He argued that the looming war was at heart a mutual misunderstanding between well-intentioned political regimes. In 1942, Mannix used his influence to allow Santamaria to dodge the draft, and as Ormonde argues, avoid fighting with the regimes he considered Christian allies. Bob, the 'intellectual' and self-declared expert on defence matters, was however, an outspoken and influential advocate of the realpolitik of 'Forward Defense' in Vietnam. He argued for a paranoid isolationism in which Australia, as an outpost of Christian civilisation, must build nuclear armaments, an aircraft industry, and introduce universal military conscription.

The contributors are far from uniform in their criticism of Santamaria. Xavier Connor's article stands apart for its overly generous attitude to the Church hierarchy. He argues that Santamaria "mesmerised" the Bishops into cooperation, implying they were not in their right minds when they syphoned off federal school grants into National Civic Council funds, or when they preached against the Labor Party from the pulpit. This is typical of a general tendency of the authors to avoid close examination of the authoritarian church culture, which facilitated Santamaria's rise to power. There is a tendency also to reduce the discussion of the Movement's activities to a theological dispute over the relationship of church and state.

As Ormonde suggests, Santamaria was a publicist, not a scholar, and his persona was an integral part of this. The public's saintly image of Santamaria was something consciously manufactured through the medium of Channel 9, the prestige of Jesuit compliance, and his demeanour of sanctimony. A dissenting and rather self-referential discussion of the Santamaria myth has centred within small magazines such as *overland*. As Nathan Hollier has pointed out, this adversarial debate contrasts with the mainstream media's representation of Bob as the universally respected and ultimately benign elder statesman (*overland* 151). Terry Monagle has questioned whether a man who distrusted (perhaps feared) the average punter, and who used an extensive network to trade information with ASIO on the ideologically impure, was actually entitled to a state funeral (*overland* 151). *Santamaria: The Politics of Fear* is an important con-

tribution to the debate over the place in history of a man whose mandate from God permitted him the greatest turpitude.

Brian Beasley is a PhD student at the University of Southern Queensland. He is working on Australian literary and political responses to the Spanish Civil War.

Social Democracy

John McLaren

Jenny Hocking: *Lionel Murphy: a political biography* (CUP, $32.95).

THIS NEW EDITION of Hocking's biography of Lionel Murphy includes an epilogue assessing his legacy. This epilogue examines the material condemning his role in a supposed network of corrupt NSW lawyers that surfaced at the end of his career and after his death. She decides that the basis of the accusations against him is decidedly insecure. More importantly, she shows that the campaign waged against him by journalists and others does not diminish his contribution to public life, which went beyond the particular reforms he instituted and reveals both "the fragility and the possibility of democracy". Her book therefore offers an occasion to reflect on the extent to which social democracy or democratic socialism may be achieved in Australia.

There is no doubt that justice and democracy were central principles in Murphy's career. He began his work as a lawyer arguing that democratic principles must be observed in the conduct of union affairs. He fought continually with the Central Executive of the NSW Labor Party, which was dominated by men who had come out of the struggles of the Industrial Groups in the 1950s. In discussing the internal politics of the Labor Party, Hocking makes a useful distinction between the Industrial Groups and Santamaria's allies. She doesn't notice that this distinction became important in NSW, and not in Victoria, only because of the 1958 intervention of the NSW bishops to separate the church from the Movement, rather than from the Labor Party. This meant that men like the anti-Grouper Senator Jim Ormonde could carry on their battle against the right without being undermined by their church. It did not however make these battles any less bitter, or the controlling Groupers any more tolerant than the hard left who after the Split assumed control of the Victorian branch. Murphy, who was associated with the Steering Committee of the NSW left, thus found his further allies in Victoria, and his implacable enemies in the NSW right, who even tried to take away his endorsement on the eve of Whitlam's 1972 electoral victory, to which Murphy contributed so much.

This does not mean that Whitlam and Murphy were friends, or even close allies. They both applied intellect to politics and found the ALP machine an obstacle on the road to office and reform. This however made them rivals rather than allies. They were both strong-willed men. They were in different houses of the federal government. They were associated with different wings of the ALP, although Whitlam was never a creature of the NSW right. These factors deepened their rivalry to antagonism, which was exacerbated by Whitlam's belief, shared by much of the party, that the Senate was superfluous and should, in accord with Labor policy, have its powers diminished or removed. Murphy was determined to use the Senate's power to its utmost. Eventually, Whitlam's disdain for the Senate was to contribute to the scandal of his dismissal.

Yet it can be argued that Murphy's role in enhancing the authority of the Senate in the interests of subjecting governments to constant public examination and, where necessary, discomfiting, was his major contribution to Australian democracy. Critics of the Senate who point to its failure to fulfil its original purpose as a states' house ignore a century's development of parliamentary and judicial institutions. Hocking herself falls into this fallacy in her discussion of the constitutional settlement, when she argues that the attempt to fuse British and American parliamentary models led to "confusion over the role of the Senate, distortion of the essence of responsible government, and had the 'founding fathers' in disarray . . . As in all the great issues the Conventions considered, so this one . . . revolved around 'the central question: where did power reside, in the people or the minority?'"

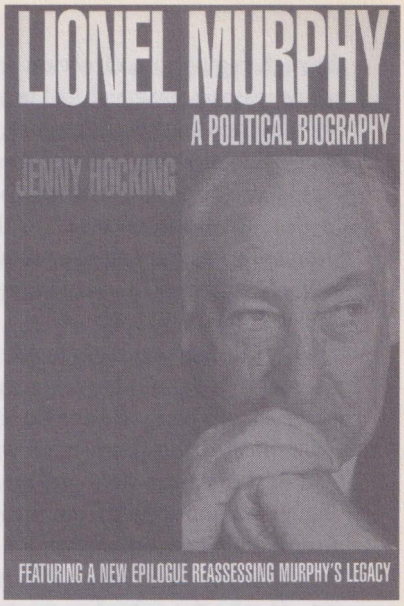
Some charge. But Hocking's quotation from Manning Clarke poses a false alternative, ignoring the fact that "the people" are always a collection of minorities. The central problem of democratic governments is to allow a majority of the people to coalesce in choosing a government, while still allowing minorities their voice in deliberation about the directions the govern-

ment takes on behalf of the nation. The evolution of the Senate as a house of minorities to counter a house dominated by the executive through its command of a majority goes far towards resolving this dilemma. Murphy's insistence on the independent authority of the Senate did much to accelerate this development. He saw this authority as providing a way of scrutinising government, of holding it accountable, not of denying it the ability to govern.

The irony of Murphy's parliamentary achievement was that during the terms of the Whitlam government, the Senate misused the authority he had developed for it. It was able to do so only because, for most of this time, it was controlled by a majority alliance of Liberal, Country Party and DLP Senators, led by Senator Reg Withers, 'the Toe-cutter', who refused to concede the government's legitimacy, despite its winning two elections, and used their numbers to oppose rather than review. During the first term, this majority owed its existence to the Senate system of alternating elections, which means that at any time half the membership reflects political alignments at least three years past. In the second term the majority was secured, albeit precariously, by improper nominations from state governments to replace Labor Senators who had retired. Malcolm Fraser instituted the constitutional change that will prevent the second of these circumstances recurring, and the first could be avoided by further change requiring concurrent elections and terms for the two houses. Even under the present system, the government has lacked a Senate majority since the early eighties, and it has generally acted as a constructive house of review in the way Murphy pioneered.

The challenge to this development will occur if an extremist party of the right is able to secure the balance of power. In such circumstances, the major parties may be tempted to follow the Tasmanian example of eliminating nuisance by increasing the quota of votes needed for election. The democratic alternative would be to increase the number of Senators, and so reduce the quota, so that no single party is likely to hold the balance. The example of the NSW upper house, for all its problems, would suggest that this can still provide an efficient legislature.

The first challenge by the Senate to Murphy's own ministerial conduct and authority came from his notorious raid on ASIO headquarters in Melbourne. Hocking suggests that Murphy was set up by officers engaged in internecine public service wars. She implies that Kerry Milte, a former Commonwealth policeman whom Murphy employed as a consultant, was one of those responsible. But her own evidence shows that ASIO had withheld information from Murphy (who as Attorney-General was the responsible minister), was removing from Canberra crucial documentation about the activities in Australia of the Croatian terrorist group, and was impeding Murphy's attempt to view the document before its destruction. The Senate committee ostensibly set up to inquire into the matter instead attacked Murphy for pursuing a vendetta against allegedly fictitious Croatian terrorists, and carried a motion of no confidence in him as minister. Yet Senator McManus, then Leader of the DLP in the Senate and a defender of the anti-communist right, had heard the rhetoric of the Anti-Communist Bloc of Nations, with which Ustashi was associated, and must have known about its potential to incite terrorism against the Yugoslav Prime Minister who was about to arrive in Australia. Murphy's actions were at first applauded by those who supported his attempts to make ASIO responsible, but this praise was drowned by the chorus of disapproval led by the *Bulletin*'s saturnine Alan Reid, and supported by a malevolent Senate majority.



As Attorney-General, Murphy consistently and energetically pursued the objective of making business, like government, accountable for its actions. He developed legislation to curb monopoly, foreign control and unfair business practices. Again, the opposition used every tactic available to it to thwart or at least postpone this legislation, which it saw as unbridled socialism. Yet Murphy was no socialist, if socialism is equated with nationalisation, but a lawyer who wanted to bridle capitalism in the interest of the consumer. He certainly did not believe that the market could ensure the democratic production and distribution of goods, and believed that the government should play a major role in these processes

through regulation, direction and participation, but not necessarily ownership. He saw society as a place of enjoyment rather than work, and sought ways of developing the resources of the nation in ways that would enable every citizen to share in its riches. Their enjoyment would be further protected by the Human Rights Act and the Racial Discrimination Act, but he succeeded in having only the second of these passed by parliament.

From his earliest days in office, Murphy pursued his goal of a Family Law Act that would reduce the miseries and inequities of the divorce process. The Act removed the vestiges of what Murphy termed "old ecclesiastical garbage" by removing questions of guilt and innocence from the issue of family breakdown, and reduced patriarchal power by recognising the rights of wives to family property. This Act, too, despite the extensive processes of consultation and discussion, and overwhelming public support, attracted vehement opposition from those who wanted to maintain ancient privilege. It was alleged that it would promote bigamy and incest and undermine the Christian truth of marriage. There was even division within his own party, but the Act eventually passed, and remains as his greatest legislative landmark.

Murphy's elevation to the High Court encountered the same kind of insensate opposition that he had met during his time in parliament. Although he was the fifth Attorney-General to make the move, his appointment was attacked as political. The Chief Justice, Sir Garfield Barwick, was affronted; the mad parliamentarian William Wentworth urged the Governor-General to refuse to endorse it. But, once on the bench, Murphy, believing in the strict separation of powers, kept a proper distance from his former political associations, while still bringing a new perspective to matters of judgement. Instead of the court's traditional legalism, expressed by some as the belief that judges do not make law, but merely declare it, he took the view that decisions should take account of political, social and economic circumstances. This was directly opposed to the stance taken by Barwick, whose distrust of democracy led him to imply constitutional powers for the court to scrutinise political procedures as well as their outcomes. It also differs from the way later members of the court have found implied powers in the constitution which have allowed them to redress what they see as failures of democracy in order to protect minorities. Murphy did not seek to extend the powers of the court, and indeed insisted that it should keep its distance from the legislative and executive processes of government. He was a centralist, and upheld to the full the powers given by the constitution to the democratically elected Commonwealth government, rather than allowing restrictive readings of these powers to limit federal authority. He also sought to read into the constitution general implications of protection of civil rights and political liberties in ways that opened the path to later justices to find unsuspected implications in the written constitution.

The power of the court to make law is, however, bound not only by the letter of the constitution, which is open to as widely different interpretations as those of Barwick and Murphy, but by the doctrine of precedent. Murphy symbolised his ascent to the bench by replacing the rows of volumes of English cases with decisions of the United States Supreme Court. But while this gesture indicates his willingness to look more widely at common and constitutional law jurisdictions for persuasive precedent, it does not tell us what he considered as binding precedent. It is the observation of precedent that distinguishes the role of a non-elected judiciary from that of a democratically elected parliament and government. Hocking offers little evidence of his views on this principle as applied to judicial interpretation, but it is clear that he believed fervently in such central common-law principles as presumed innocence, and was hostile to attempts to evade these principles by such measures as the use of necessarily vague accusations of conspiracy and improper conduct. The central irony of his life is that these were the tactics eventually used to discredit him as a judge.

Hocking tells us in her biography that one of Murphy's aims on going to the bench was to make the law more accessible, and so to involve the ordinary citizen in its processes. Accordingly, his judgements were brief and written in accessible language. Unfortunately, this meant that they omitted the extensive legal research and reasoning on which he had based them, and consequently were less effective in influencing later judgements. When some of his legal associates pointed this out, he began to write at greater length, but by then his career was coming to its end.

The account of Murphy's final 'troubles', as his defence lawyer termed them, makes harrowing reading. It is a clear example of the way that political hatreds can override just procedures and misuse parliamentary forms to subvert democratic ends. Murphy was brought undone by a combination of

his political enemies, a pusillanimous Labor government and caucus, scurrilous journalism and dubious informers from the police and the judiciary. Their pursuit of him was at the cost of bringing their own institutions into disrepute, but succeeded in its objective of preventing any possibility – if it ever existed – of him becoming Chief Justice. It therefore served the ends of the powerful interests who objected to everything he had stood for, and particularly his support of the powerless. His final defiance, however, reasserted his own integrity and that of the Court to which he belonged. He refused to surrender his position to rumour and innuendo.

In an Epilogue written for this edition, Hocking extends her examination of the material used to discredit Murphy to consider the further accusations made in the press after his death, particularly the remarks posthumously attributed to Jim McClelland. The accounts of these remarks differ from both the recording of his interview and from evidence given at the earlier trials and parliamentary investigations. They state as facts that he was of doubtful integrity and had been guilty of attempting to pervert the course of justice. The first of these claims lacks any substantive basis, and the second had been specifically rejected by a jury. The new charges, based on McClelland's statements, were that Murphy had approached him in an attempt to 'nobble' another, and that he was guilty of interfering with the trial of Morgan Ryan. But McClelland in his interview nowhere uses the words 'guilty' or 'nobbled', expresses great admiration and friendship for Murphy, and states that he was the one who approached Judge Staunton before any conversation about the matter with Murphy. The journalists used their own interpretations of McClelland's words as statements of fact to fix on the dead Murphy a guilt he had convincingly refuted while alive.

Murphy's career as a radical parliamentarian shows that a determined politician can change the circumstances of our lives, but to change the system requires the determination, unity and parliamentary support that eluded the Whitlam government. This parliamentary failure in turn opens the way for courts to exceed their proper authority in an attempt to redress it, and changes the focus of society from public debate to private litigation. His experience on the court demonstrates the crucial need for all parties to observe the separation of powers. His whole career is a reminder to democratic socialists that change is possible, but only at great personal cost.

Hocking's book is a valuable account of a man who entered fully into life, mocked the straiteners and helped the weak, extended democracy and justice, and paid a heavy price. It would have been still better if she had been more critical, over such matters as his belief that the constitution is the proper instrument for guaranteeing civil liberties, or whether he should personally have been involved in the raid on ASIO. Her work would also have been improved by an editor more conversant with the niceties of punctuation and syntax. Both the author and her subject deserved better.

John McLaren is overland*'s consulting editor.*

"I still believe in Jeffrey Hunter": new poetry

Kerry Leves

Xuan Duong: *refugee Refugees see the East Timorese?* (Integration, PO Box 34 Bankstown NSW 2200, $15 includes postage).

STUNNING. It might be the day-to-day diary of the refugee, if the language hadn't been worked into an agent of corrosive brilliance. Practitioners of 'language' poetry could do worse than peruse it – this is syntax as lightheaded hunger, lexis as the stupefaction of beatings and other terrors. "Every time a round eyed child/ Gets hung dangling amongst/ The barbs without even moaning/ To the starved spider next door/ The wire sobs complaining it can/ Never be a true entertainer/ For a true audience". An epic vision of war from a non-winning side, it exudes solitude – "Life?/ A grain of salt/ Time?/ A mastless yacht/ Place?/ A littered pen/ You?/ A droplet" – and is a work of fierce artistic integrity, digging deep into the affect-side of callousness, the self-contempt that's a product of torture. Graphic in its depictions of cruelty, it never quite loses touch with the simplicities of an indifferent universe – oceans, sunrises, the play of tropic breezes. The ever-present macabre humour is shocking, scathing and irresistible.

Rebecca Edwards: *Scar Country* (UQP, $19.95).

MUCH HAPPENS. Here, a palm is being read: "But you say I'll be rich/ as if along that ragged line/ a shadow-aunt brooded over an egg of gold."

Here, a writing praxis is interrogated: "You might say I'm feeding off this matter, that my mouth introduces/ more filth than my stomach can carry off./ You might say I look down, I look in, that I follow too closely/ the wriggling traces in the slabs of bark and skin." This spectacular first book is rich, explicit and fetid with the smells, sights and sounds of its Queensland context – pubs, parties convened against death, people making-out with or paying-out on each other, rough loving, incipient and overt violence. It's also superlatively thoughtful, mining its own lush discourse down to a vein of adamantine scepticism – the latter seems hard-won, enhancing rather than inhibiting the book's social ecology with its empathic but mindful reaching-out to people and other creatures.

Chris Mikul: *TV poems* (Pluto Press, $11.95).

THE TIMESPAN is roughly from the late 1960s into the seventies. The shows – including the Aussie-grown 'Homicide' and 'Number 96' and the US-based 'Adventures of Superman' and 'Hawaii Five-O' – are restaged as poetry so as to be 'about' the possibilities unleashed or curtailed in the various minds of a very-young-to-teenaged male viewer. The personal content can't be prised away from the cultural context, and vice versa. The poems work intricately for their morphing effects, but the writing is kept to a limpid demotic style. "Now, when Easter comes around/ and *King of Kings* is on, I always watch it/ I don't believe in Jesus any more/ but I still believe in Jeffrey Hunter." This small book is pleasing to the senses; a nifty production that includes notes on all the shows and movies mentioned, and illustrations. The sustained ingenuous tones can accommodate ironies of a flexible, exploratory kind.

Samuel Wagan Watson: *Of muse, meandering and midnight* (UQP, $19.95).

MAY REVIVE for readers the venerable, almost forgotten idea that poetry is to be overheard rather than just heard or silently read. The opening sequence – a suite of love/ muse poems – positions the reader as eavesdropper, listening-in on the pulses of a river, a city, a lover – each of these the creation of a sensibility that downplays, is subtly funny yet can load the urban demotic with emotion: ". . . light no longer shining through/ her window/ where as a sentimental act/ we clasped and watched the stormbirds . . ./ no more 2am's/ cut out of the darkness with a corkscrew". Under the 'meandering' rubric, the scope of the book widens into the "white stucco dreaming" of a black childhood in the Brisbane suburbs; "jetty nights" when "from under the song of the swaying pines in the darkness,/ the night water fondles the pylons" and "the smell of mashed potatoes and chops hangs in the air/ drags our attention back to the shoreline cottages/ Ray Martin chatters somewhere in the glow of sixty watt lighting . . ." The final section takes on cross-cultural issues with some force, but it's the lyricism that's memorable.

Hazel Smith: *keys round her tongue* (Soma, $16.50).

REVALORISES the word 'explore' as a verb for what poetry can do. The visual format is very deliberate: the arrangement of text (various fonts, a passage of musical notation) surprises and pleases the eye; the prosody appeals to the ear. *keys round her tongue* seems to inscribe a search; at intervals it tracks the cultural makings of a possible 'she' or female 'I': "Viola is bored. It is 1959, Passover, the Seder night, and her father is reading from the Haggadah. He drones on about how God liberated the Jews from Pharaoh . . ." This book's journey invokes a much freer soundscape, entices the reader to listen for rhythm and the roots of rhythm in a living body of words that can rhyme, pun, chant, suddenly prefer plain statement, make brooding sensuous play in an ur-tongue all their own, or talk to other created spaces – Kate Hamilton's photograph of Sieglinde Karl's she-oak-needle sculpture 'Casuarina Woman' has occasioned a very strong, if elliptical piece of writing, and makes a haunting visual poem by itself.

Robin Loftus: *Backyard Cosmos* (Catchfire Press, $16.50).

SHARES WITH readers the unfolding of created intensities, from "light glanc[ing] off water" down to "the green/ and granite cities of the listening sea". Robin Loftus' language is straightforward, even commonplace at times, yet the phrasing of her controlled-free-form poetry is astute. Lust, grief, childbirth and love are written with an integrity of feeling that may impress as primal, while her feminist take on the Virgin Mary makes a lively, witty entertainment: "I'm tired of forever sitting/ with this great child on my lap." Yet the book's title and eponymous poem seem oddly apologetic – and for what? This poetry moves and soars – who needs the backyard debriefing?

Brendan Ryan: *Why I am not a farmer* (fip, $9.95).

CREATES A countryscape that wedges into the dizzy forgetfulness of cities where "life is cheap,

nasty, constantly arriving". Ryan's farm scenes are lively with detail: "Beneath a row of withered gums/ the collapsed skin of a bull/ slips from the teeth/ of a ribcage . . . / The skull, dragged to the side/ records sunlight passing through two hollow wounds." There are no noble heroics or anti-heroics (refreshingly, Ryan's poet doesn't seem to feel the need to "celebrate"); instead there's a between-the-lines marvelling at the doggedness, the razor-minded persistence farming life demands. There's also a carefully-nuanced evocation of a rural culture: "slanted pig sheds, ferns rising/ out of dumped windscreens . . ./ the paddock where the Drive-In was", all "passing into the light of an unfinished dream" as technology automates cowyards though "the radio still crackles through a playlist that stopped at 1985." Pungent, more-ish, peppered with contrastive urban moments.

Vera Newsom: *High Tide* (fip, $16.45).

EACH POEM seems poised on an ontological edge, between being and non-being, matter and antimatter. In her eighty-ninth year, Vera Newsom has produced a book about final things, about boundaries and their movement: "Time is growing ragged at the edges/ like an old letter handled too often." Occasionally there's a distilled summative wisdom: "How we hoard them,/ those moments/ we hear love speak." But the mood is less retrospective than attentive to the immediacy of its created moments, splendours of an everyday kind – "I dally with time,/ . . . fix my eyes on the wattle bush,/ awash in pale gold and a welter of bees" – that have become more cherishable in death's proximity. "This is the living now, the present tense." Many fine and thoughtful poems, e.g. 'Woman at Dusk', 'Harebells', 'Wind', the 'Lazarus' sequence and those dedicated to Roland Robinson and Janet Frame.

Adam Ford, Stephen Grimwade, alicia sometimes (eds): *going down swinging* number 18, 2000 (includes CD, $16.50).

CD IS A REVELATION – a raft of diverse performing styles, from Lauren Williams' unaccompanied, casually-delivered erotic wit ('Killer Instinct', recorded live) to Ian McBryde's multi-textured 'Mute Testament', which uses Middle-Eastern rhythms, contrast, interlude and polyphony – strings, drums, woodwinds, vocals by McBryde and again Williams – to ferry the listener into eerie, ghostly domains. The poetry comes in four modes: without music (e.g. Kieran Carroll using his voice like a one-man band; π.o.'s multi-vocal, blisteringly funny 'Talkback Radio'); laid on top of music (Chicago-type jazz prowls under Hugh Tolhurst's lovely 'Horse Lyrics' though the result is hypercool monotony); working with the music's rhythms (Michael Crane's folk-like, delicate, luminously surreal 'Another Strange Day in Paradise'); or as part of the form of the music, making a holistic auditory experience. A number of works qualify there: Stripe and Koral's 'Mayakovsky' (pumping); Emilie Zoey Baker's 'nightclub' (racy mood caught in burnished musical amber); Low Key and Nude's 'Rufige' (space-age robotic techno, at once clinical and operatic); and Fiona Roake and Jo Davidson's 'Cry me a river' (jazz singing contrasts with spoken monologue, each is rhythmed to bass guitar, and the department-store satire has some juice: "If socks are indeed going for $6.95/ then let's not stop them!") The seventy-five minutes of CD doesn't duplicate any of the texts in the accompanying book. Great value: a map of contemporary poetic directions, a mine of cultural info., and exhilarating.

Margaret Scott: *Collected Poems* (Montpelier Press, $25).

AS A PERFORMER, Margaret Scott reached a huge audience via the TV cabaret 'Good News Week', the way Elizabeth Riddell did via radio in the 1950s. The irony is that viewers watching the wry, affable, precariously dignified Scott may receive no inkling how vivid, delicate and strong her poetry can be. There's nothing half-baked or unsolid about this book, which collects from over twenty years' work and three previous volumes. The writing is very committed – to its forms, which manage an attractively varied word-music and an elegant look without leaving any taste of formalism-for-its-own-sake – and to its readers, who are never short-changed. The worldliness doesn't coarsen the sense of an unprecious, lived spirituality. This is a poetry that considers – with verve and curiosity – the life lived and the alternatives to it. "Tonight my parents have the album out./ Sunny children beam from the well-lit page./ The mother speaks of poky rooms she kept/ and touches paper hands across the years./ Outside the darkness coils against the glass/ and mouths and mouths its meal of long-lost bones." One of many pleasures is the old-fashioned development of poem into surprise; the technique is more subtle than the consistent mimetic liveliness might suggest.

Kerry Leves is a NSW poet.

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