

25 YEARS ON:

Ruling Class



RULING CULTURE

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Ruling class & culture

JEFF KENNETT, Victorian Premier 1992–1999, was never really the brightest crayon in the packet. He seemed to believe that all he needed to keep folks voting for him was to be himself: a boof-headed Scotch College boy who'd never lost a liking for stuffing people's heads down toilets. Not very clever. Better to embrace the 'fair go' and 'mateship', like John Howard. Terms like these, says Donald Horne, weren't as common in the initial post-war decades as is now thought; they were used mostly by trade unionists and on Anzac Day (*The Age*, 25 May 2002). It's doubtful that Howard encountered them as part of his formative *petit bourgeois* culture and later ascension to North Shore affluence.

But as the years go by and local workforces and communities are dispersed by market forces, nostalgia becomes the mechanism for justifying further attacks on community and tradition. Howard, a key defender of unfettered competition, doesn't blink an eyelid when McDonald's moves shamelessly into 'Indian' food, but grits his teeth and defends his unemployment minister and Opus Dei fanatic Tony Abbott, who'd just blamed poverty on the poor, as an ordinary 'bloke'. You could see John Winston cringing when he used the term: Have I gone too far? Will I be ridiculed? But people seem to wear it. That slightly wounded, resentful face, the tone of patient reason, the feigned indignation at any accusation of malevolent intent: a self-righteous and mean-spirited schoolyard dobber still seeking the approval of his teacher, Margaret Thatcher.

Howard appeals to the egalitarianism of Russel Ward's working-class Australian Legend, even while asserting class was "thrown out" as part of the Australian settlement. Who threw it out? Did the convicts get off the ships of 1788 doing high fives, talking up teamwork and playing confidence-building games with their soldier-managers? Or was it the Aborigines, who immediately fell in love with the trickle-down effect of imperialist capitalism and felt privileged to watch white men and women use it in such imaginative and far-sighted ways?

Whoever threw out class didn't, unfortunately, get rid of 'elites': those who later selfishly persuaded Aborigines against all reason (and probably while under the influence of the coffee bean) that social welfare was necessary. And there are snobs. Tony Abbott's job snobs, those long-term unemployed, who make us all work so hard. They deserve to be hated, thinking they're just sooooo grand. But not John Elliott. He's lived in Footscray and someone says he says 'pig's arse'. Or Kerry Packer, he swears too. Or Rupert Murdoch, who battles round the clock. Who could suggest he hasn't earned his money? If everyone made as good use of the media empire they inherited we'd all be multi-billionaires. If he never makes it down to Alan Jones's 'Struggle Street' himself, Murdoch's newspapers are good enough to employ worthy tribunes of the people like Andrew Bolt, nobly spreading his South African traditions here. Anyone can make it in this country,

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Howard says, and indeed anyone seems to qualify as 'a battler', so long as they're white and in gainful employment. It's a great scene to be in, becoming more attractive every week as the final diggers die and are shepherded into a united white Australian memory. Our forefathers suffered for this land, making it morally safe for us to own it.

But Howard doesn't have it all his own way at the national pulpit. Oh no, this is a democracy and by Christ he's going to be subjected to some feisty and spirited criticism! Mark Latham in particular has constantly, remorselessly, gutsily shouted to the people, if only they'd listen, that these days real battlers don't exist. Latham says that a magic formula of universal prosperity has been invented, its acronym a poetry of deep humanity and profound happiness: NASDAQ. When the internet and stockmarket come together, bosses and workers are no more. New Economy entrepreneurs are cool and wear runners, T-shirts and jeans with no belts. Ignore structure. Ignore economics, sociology and history, those tired disciplines of the old world. Ignore massive and rapidly increasing inequity, longer working hours, decreased job security and conditions. Just do it.

Many in the public sphere do just that. In his recent essay on Howard (*The Opportunist*), Guy Rundle maps out well some ways that the spread of free markets and state-sponsored social conservatism have enabled increasing economic insecurity and cultural unrest. But at no stage does Rundle stop and ask who benefits from this political and discursive state of affairs. It is rare for anyone in contemporary Australia to draw a direct connection between the deteriorating conditions of those at the bottom and the skyrocketing wealth of those at the top, between the exclusion of the poor from public debate and the exploitation by the rich of working-class iconography. For the past twenty years, even while market forces were put in place to destroy the independence of the University, partly at the ranted behest of right-wing think tanks and media commentators, many humanities and social science intellectuals have gazed introspectively on the cultural margins of society and neglected to glare at its material centre.

People face a choice between blandly accepting that culture has become separated from material structures and economic processes, as Howard, Latham and many thinkers in thrall of postmodernism do, or, as R.W. Connell does in this issue, identifying and explaining the relations between these things and subjecting them to criticism.

For many years, even before I'd read it fully, spying Connell's *Ruling Class Ruling Culture* in second-hand bookshops was a vaguely comforting experience.

Someone, somewhere, wrote about society and power in terms of domination and hence also, agency and resistance, and backed up these investigations with reference to empirical data and objective measurements of resource ownership and control. Connell's arguments hold out the possibility of escaping the labyrinth of relativism associated with the hermeneutic circle, of offering constructive policy alternatives, of moving society forward in a democratic and socially just way. This commitment to evidence and logic is why Connell is recognised around the world as a significant scholar in the fields of education, gender studies, sociology and history.

It is now twenty-five years since *Ruling Class Ruling Culture* first appeared, and to mark the occasion *overland* has produced this issue, organised a conference and is planning a further publication based on conference papers. Connell suggests here that neo-liberalism has functioned as the ideology of a qualitative shift, from industrial to finance capital, as the dominant global repository of class power. The free market has replaced direct state coercion as the most fundamental means of social control. Yet the heroic and emotionally uplifting liberation of markets also necessitates a less glamorous and often dirty underside, of more corporate regulators trying hopelessly to protect 'mum and dad' investors, of heightened surveillance and control of society itself and of those who want to come in from outside. Paramilitary policing and private security are on the rise, new refugee detention centres are being built and legislation greatly strengthening the powers of the Australian secret police is before parliament. These are contradictions that reinforce but may in time destabilise contemporary capitalism.

overland is then in the peculiar position of being disappointed and heartened by the decision of *The Age* to reject, at a late stage, an accepted excerpt of Connell's piece. While wanting access to a broader readership, part of the reason we exist is to publish material which, in spite of its obvious readability and intellectual quality, will not be published in the mainstream press. In the 1980s and 1990s, a wave of ironised 'political correctness' rhetoric blew in from America, complaining about what those at the economic and cultural centre supposedly couldn't say. This has been replaced by a deadly serious second wave, following September 11, curtailing what those at the margins can say. In light of recent *Age* editorial decisions and evidence of the Right's intimidation of the ABC, it is to be hoped that mass-media bosses are not completely ruling out criticism of this latest wave of American political correctness.

NATHAN HOLLIER

R.W. Connell

Moloch Mutates

Global capitalism and the evolution of the Australian ruling class, 1977–2002

THIS ESSAY IS being written six months after the *Tampa* triumph and the Howard government's campaign of lies about 'children overboard'. Like Menzies in 1954, the conservative leadership in 2001 turned a probably lost election around by stunningly successful scare tactics. Our masters have not forgotten how to craft a killer combination of xenophobia and social panic.

The moral squalor of our current national government has become painful. Howard's nudges and winks to bigots now add up to a sustained incitement of racism. The government has conducted a stealth redistribution towards the privileged, via a battery of subsidies, sell-offs and tax devices. It has launched increasingly vicious attacks on scapegoats, from homosexuals to single mothers to the unemployed. It continues to trade the environment and public safety to short-term business interests. As the stink grows about ex-ministers paid by lobby groups, we tend to forget what they did while still ministers: leak lucrative information to the specialists, collude in a paramilitary union-smashing campaign, and so forth.

Less commented on, but just as important, is the Howard government's incompetence. Simply considered as an administration, this must be the worst ministry since Federation. The comic opera in foreign affairs, the ham-fisted handling of Aboriginal affairs, four billion dollars lost in foreign exchange dealing, the farce of education policy, the medical insurance crisis, are among the highlights but are far from being the full list. There are very few areas, apart from privatisation of public resources, where one could look to the Howard government for a coherent policy direction in public affairs, an intelligent approach to the resolution of a social problem, or even an articulation of ideas or purposes beyond the level of cliché.

I don't think this happens by chance. There are reasons why we have this kind of government, which have to do with the recent history of Australian and world capitalism.

Another Illinois

THE RISE OF neo-liberalism, though it has local consequences, is a global event. It was partly driven by new groups entering the political and business leadership in centres such as London. But the ideology has spread worldwide through right-wing think tanks, the academic world, and institutions like the IMF – and through corporations and markets themselves.

Starting with the Eurodollar market of the 1960s, the world economy has seen a massive growth of mobile capital. Local capital markets have been amalgamated, using new communications technology, into an interacting global financial system. At some point in this process the quantitative increase in mobile funds became a qualitative shift in hegemony from industrial capital to finance capital. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that neo-liberalism has functioned as the ideology of this shift.

Locally, this shift has made obsolete the model of Australian capitalism developed by left-wing critics in the period of the welfare state, and partly adopted in *Ruling Class Ruling Culture*. In 1970 Sol Encel summarised the main idea:

Leaving the rural sector aside, the Australian economy might be accurately described as a system of monopoly capitalism, operating through a highly regulated structure of output, prices and wages, which is interlocked with and maintained by an extensive system of government activity.
(*Equality and Authority*, p. 322.)

From the 1970s on, an increasing proportion of the business leadership came to reject the 'industrial relations club', the system of class compromise embodied in the centralised regulation of the labour market. Business opted for a higher-risk strategy in dealing with the workforce, a more confrontational logic. And it seems to have worked. There has been a redistribution of income towards capital, without a rise in working-class militancy.

A parallel shift occurred in relation to the social wage. Business became increasingly hostile to the institutional machinery of the welfare state and to the progressive taxation regime that supported it. In the early 1980s business ideologists in Australia, copying US models, began a sustained campaign to stigmatise 'welfare' in particular, and the public sector in general. In effect, they set out to undo the Menzies strategy for Australian conservatism, based on the Keynesian settlement reached in Australia in the 1940s and early 1950s.

This too was successful. As the new approach gained a grip on Australian politics, there has been a steady squeeze in funding for public services and public institutions, from railways to universities. The cumulative effect has degraded the services and damaged the morale of public sector workers, making the surviving welfare state institutions less and less effective.

The neo-liberal triumph has thus ended the vision of Australia as a social laboratory. There was some reality to this idea a hundred years ago, when Australian women were among the first in the world to get the vote, when Queensland had the first labour government in the world, when institutions for class negotiation in industry were freshly invented. Or fifty years ago, when an Australian welfare state had been designed and the social landscape was being transformed by immigration. There was even some reality to the idea in the 1970s, when EEO and feminist action through the state were pioneered in Australia, when urban social movements and central government began to interact in new ways (as shown by Tom Uren and Jack Munday), and a distinctive Australian combination of civil liberties, social welfare and cultural diversity seemed to be developing.

Why did this change in the terms of Australian life happen? I don't pretend to understand it in full, but some things are clear. It did not happen as a result of straightforward ruling-class mobilisation, which had been the key mechanism in the conservative revival of the late 1940s. Neo-liberalism operated through the labour movement and the bureaucracy as well as through the right-wing parties. And it gained a grip in the labour movement partly because of panic about the position of Australia in world capitalism.

In a truly stunning transition, which makes the late 1980s the most important turning-point in recent Australian history, the cure and the disease became one. The preferred solution to the threat of global competition was to embrace the global competitive forces, attempt to blend the Australian economy into the international economy.

This meant more than opening the economy by lowering tariff barriers (which after all had been lowered by the Whitlam government). Through deregulation of the financial system, then through a sustained program of privatisation, the Australian economy was increasingly made to *resemble*, as well as interact with, the US economy and the system of trade and capital movements centred on the United States. Rather than a distinctive unit in a world system, Australia increasingly became simply a zone of operations for globally acting economic power.

Nowadays, large multinational firms that operate in Australia typically do not have an independent Australian division. (Though of course they have legal entities in Australia.) Either they are organised functionally on a global scale, or they include their Australian operations in an Asia-Pacific division. Ex-

In one of the most dazzling deceptions in contemporary history, this huge expansion of the logic of greed has been sold as a moral triumph.

ecutives managing such divisions often live in Australia – we are white, after all – but it is the larger space that is the target of the multinational corporation's serious strategy-making.

Australian capitalism is still a dependent capitalism, but in a different way from both the era of colonialism and that of dependent industrialisation that ended in the 1970s. Neo-liberal globalisation has complex effects in culture. Zygmunt Bauman (*Globalisation: The Human Consequences*) and Dennis Altman (*Global Sex*) may be right that in civil society there is actually an increase of global diversity. But the same historical

process certainly irons out *economic* difference. In economic terms, Australia comes to look more like Illinois, or Bavaria, or Kyushu, or any other substantial chunk of the developed world.

Difference digested: the change of structure

IN THE 1970S Antonio Negri argued that capitalism no longer operated on the basis of an economic 'law of value'; value is now determined by political struggle. Negri was right in appreciating the energy that remained in capitalist politics, and also in his prediction of the political re-imposition of the law of value. But like many on the left at the time, he thought capitalism would respond to challenge by direct state power – by a mutation of the Keynesian system in the direction of violence. Something of the sort did happen in Italy, and on a larger scale in Latin America, but that solution did not last.

The originality of neo-liberalism was that it solved this problem by a turn *away from* direct state power. The law of value was re-imposed not by bayonets but by a gigantic growth, a hypertrophy, of the market. State power is certainly used, but used indirectly – to create markets where they did not exist before, and to wreck or corrode public institutions and cooperatives that provided alternatives to market relationships.

Market logic, as commentators on neo-liberalism have long recognised, functions as a meta-policy governing all areas of public life. It overrides the specificity of institutions just as it overrides the specificity of

regions. What passes for 'policy' is, generally speaking, the attempt to expand the reach of markets, or to create markets where they did not exist before.

In Australia two of the most striking examples are in education and employment. Neo-liberal 'education' policy is largely an attempt to turn education from a public service into a market-ruled industry, by increasing competition among schools and technical education institutions, turning universities into competitive corporations (a goal now half-achieved), and propping up private schools. Neo-liberal 'employment' policy includes downward pressure on wages, and the demolition of the Commonwealth Employment Service, replaced by competition among contractors – which has turned out a disaster for the long-term unemployed.

Neo-liberal regimes have thus presided over a steady expansion of the role of the commodity as a social form. More and more of the goods and services formerly provided by the public sector, voluntary agencies, and even families, have been turned into commodities sold for profit by entrepreneurs. We not only have fast food sold by franchises. Increasingly we have fast education, fast health, fast welfare, fast prisons, not to mention private freeways, private railways, private electricity, and private water supply.

We also have a cloud of 'consultants' around governments, including big firms such as Andersen, KPMG and their ilk, who have made a killing out of advising governments to undertake privatisations and then 'managing' the privatisation process. These agencies now do much of the research and policy development formerly done by government departments that gives the state its steering capacity.

The expansion of markets and the spread of the commodity form means that the institutions producing goods and services are increasingly homogenised. The functions, staff, and even organisational units which used to belong to government departments, local governments, boards, cooperatives, mutuals, clubs and associations, have gone into the digester and have all emerged as companies. 'Privatisation' of public assets and institutions is only part of this. A spectacular example is the de-mutualisation of the National Roads and Motorists' Association in NSW, led by the corporate entrepreneur Nick Whitlam. In this case the process of commodification became well-understood because it was bitterly resisted, and remains only half completed. In other big insurance mutuals there was little resistance.

As the corporate form becomes the norm for all

social institutions, two significant changes in class structure follow. One has been widely discussed, the other is hardly discussed at all.

The visible change is that *ownership* has spread, as many more people hold shares in some company or other. The sell-off of agencies like Qantas and Telstra has been the main force in lifting the percentage of Australian adults who own shares. This has been trumpeted as a social revolution by our new cultural leaders, the Australian Stock Exchange. (The ASX has itself been de-mutualised, so we now have a listed company presiding over the trade in shares of listed companies; capitalism has become reflexive.)

This growth in the numbers of people owning shares is undoubtedly politically important, though hardly revolutionary in economic terms. Something similar had already occurred through insurance and pension funds. What it means economically is that the fundraising networks of corporate capitalism have been extended more widely. The percentage of people who actually derive a significant proportion of their income from property ownership remains small.

The less visible change is in the ruling-class leadership. Privatisations and de-mutualisations, as well as the general swelling of the corporate economy, have increased the mass of corporate executives. Corporate managers, despite attempts to constitute management as a 'profession', are in no sense a social group distinct from the owners of capital. Managers are that part of the ruling class who appropriate property-based incomes in the form of 'packages' and extremely high salaries more than in the form of dividends. At the very top level of management, this appropriation reverts to the old property form, as a large percentage of top executive 'compensation' now consists of shares and share options, or – as illustrated by One.Tel – outright gifts of part of the capital, called 'bonuses'.

At the same time, the upper levels of the state have been restructured to resemble the upper levels of the

corporate economy. Senior public servants, and executives of corporatised public agencies (including universities), now work in conditions modelled on those of business executives. They are employed on contracts, at greatly increased salaries, with individually negotiated (and often secret) packages, and subject to performance audits and restructures. They are markedly more vulnerable to the displeasure of their political masters, while the rewards for compliance with the neo-liberal agenda have rocketed.

This has meant some change in recruitment to the business leadership of the ruling class. More paths, and more various paths, lead into the corporate elite, and this means a somewhat more diverse group climbing up the hill. More migrants, and more women, have entered middle management. More corporate executives have a background in the public service, or in the professions, or in academia. Deregulation, globalisation and the rise of finance capital, together with the rise of some new industries, created

spaces for new men such as the corporate manipulators of the 1980s (Bond, Skase etc.).

We should not exaggerate this change. When the Congressional 'Glass Ceiling Commission' researched the US corporate elite in the 1990s, it found the top executives of the top corporations were 97 per cent white and 95 to 97 per cent men. In Australia there are still very few women CEOs (or soon-to-be CEOs). But the trend towards diversification creates at least a potential problem of integration among the capitalist leadership. And this problem may be sharpened, rather than eased, by the cultural change that has come with neo-liberalism.

The change of culture

AS PUBLIC SERVICES have been turned into commodities, citizens have been redefined as customers. I first noticed this on a government bus in Sydney about fifteen years ago, when I read a notice



"...Oh really?...The Public Service?... Sell-offs, spin management or riot control?..."

addressed to 'customers' that made me blink – I had thought I was a passenger. A few days ago I discovered that my local council no longer gives information to residents or ratepayers. Instead it has a 'customer help desk'.

More and more, people have been encouraged to think of their relationship with the collective processes of society as that of a purchaser in a market, or an owner seeking profit. In both cases the fundamental imperative is to improve one's private return at the expense of others.

In one of the most dazzling deceptions in contemporary history, this huge expansion of the logic of greed has been sold as a moral triumph. The growth of the market is presented to us as a growth of individual freedom, an attack on rigid bureaucracy and stifling regulation, an expansion of choice, even – in some of the more shameless propaganda for privatisation – as economic democracy, a return of property to 'the public'.

But the freedom promoted is freedom to do one thing: make money. For all the trumpeting of 'values' from right-wing politicians, there is no valuing of human beings here except as a source of advantage. Therefore there is nothing fundamental to restrain the tactics through which one gains advantage. Any competitive edge is a good edge. Even if it means lying to the people, cooking the corporate books, slandering targets of opportunity, or building concentration camps in poor Pacific countries.

Of course there has been resistance to this transvaluation. Teachers continue to value education, nurses continue to value health, academics continue to value knowledge. This, however, is countered by the attack on 'provider capture', a key aspect of neo-liberal social politics. Trading on popular frustrations with bureaucratic systems, this attack has generated an elaborate discourse of 'accountability'. New systems of surveillance and 'performance indicators' now dominate life in the remains of the public sector.

These systems institutionalise distrust of the professional workforce. Just as the industrial systems studied by Harry Braverman (*Labor and Monopoly Capital*) a generation ago concentrated technical knowledge in the hands of management, so the new surveillance systems concentrate knowledge about professional practice in the hands of managers and accountants. This knowledge can be used, and is used, to control events silently through funding structures rather than openly through formal policy-making and public debate.

In almost every area of public life the result has been a decline of democracy, a retreat from policy-making in public arenas, a greater concentration of authority in the hands of a managerial and entrepreneurial elite. The complex structures of representation and social compromise that had been growing up around the welfare state from the 1960s to the 1980s have been flattened, wherever neo-liberal governments have come to power. The Kennett government in Victoria provides the most dramatic illustration in Australia of the disruption of public institutions and democratic processes. But the loss of morale in the public sector, the voluntary sector, and the workforce of the private sector – a sense of exhaustion, hopelessness, and loss of purpose – is nationwide, and is very striking.

Apart from a heavily intimidated ABC, the mass media is controlled by corporate capital and funded by advertising. Most of the corporately owned media are now assimilated into the cultural world of neo-liberalism – though there remain some centres of media professionalism, as there remain some academic centres that have resisted the corporatisation of universities.

Neo-liberal media presuppose the market logic in the way they interpret the social world to their audiences. It was, I think, in the 1980s that share market prices became a routine item in the daily TV news. But the penetration of market logic goes much deeper than that. For instance, the market logic in education, the idea that the worth of a school is measured by competitive exam results, has been presupposed in scandalously bad reporting that attacks government schools in poverty-blighted suburbs for their poor results in public exams. Much more airplay has been given to attacks on 'welfare cheats' and 'dole bludgers' than to the institutional failures of the marketised employment and welfare services.

The language of the outspoken rebel, in the world of corporate media, is appropriated by the right-wing shock jocks – who actually lead the charge in scapegoating the weak. The now-evident corruption of talkback radio (sanitised by the media's own term, 'cash-for-comment') does not seem to have reduced its appeal, or its usefulness, by an ounce.

The merging with global capitalism extends even to the language of neo-liberalism. The terminology is almost wholly imported: the attacks on 'political correctness', 'welfare dependency' and 'provider capture', the exaltation of 'the market', 'the culture of enterprise', 'incentive', and so on.

Howard adopted this language prematurely in the 1980s, when his trumpeting of 'incentivation' was greeted with some laughter. No-one is laughing any more. In Australian cities we now have shops entirely devoted to selling 'motivational' posters, plaques and the like, with pictures of bald eagles in flight and slogans encouraging the office workforce to work harder ('achieve'), conform ('teamwork'), and believe in the corporate ethos. (Bald eagles come from America, and smell of fish, but you can't tell that from the posters.)

There is absolutely no reason why the new ruling-class leadership should be interested in the local production of ideas. It has no interest in sponsoring a local intelligentsia or a vibrant higher-education system. It understands 'research' as a matter of helping corporations make profits from new inventions, and woe betide any Vice-Chancellor who does not fall in with this agenda.

The cultural barrenness of neo-liberalism is striking. In twenty years of hegemony in Australian government, the new conservatism has attracted only one intellectual figure of any weight. That is the poet Les Murray, and the best the government could do with Murray was use him as bait to attract support for a purely cosmetic change to the constitution.

The second team in power

CONSERVATIVE ACCEPTANCE of the welfare state in the 1940s, and conservative administration of welfare states up to the 1970s, in political terms were responses to working-class strength. In cultural terms, however, they reflected an old ethos of government and public service.

In the ideology of the imperial ruling class, from which the ideology of Australian capitalism historically came, the right to rule flowed from the rulers' care for the public weal, their capacity to represent the common interest of society. We can trace an idea of public service as the highest value from the Indian

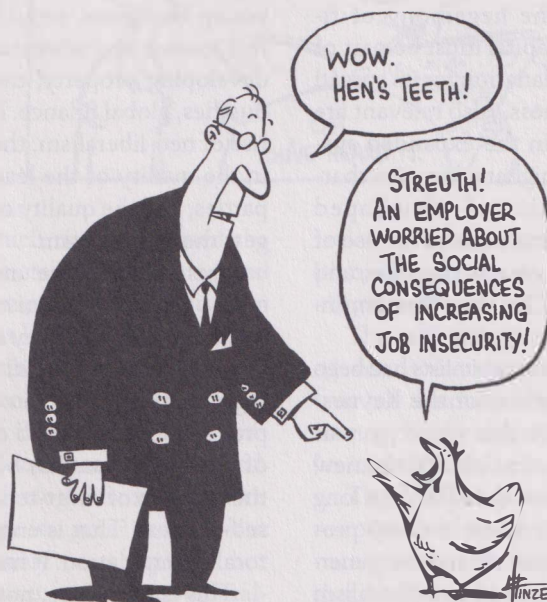
Civil Service of the nineteenth century, through business 'service clubs' such as Rotary, to the architects of Roosevelt's New Deal, Adenauer's economic miracle and de Gaulle's planning-state. We can trace the same ethos to Essington Lewis in the 1940s and the mandarins of Menzies' Canberra in the 1950s. In this framework it was accepted that private power and wealth were ultimately subordinated to social needs. That gave leverage which was used to bring capitalists, sometimes unwillingly (Menzies had a

lot of work to do, persuading and intimidating his own social base), into the social compromises represented by the welfare state.

In the functional division of ruling-class leadership between the business elite and the political elite, this ideology gave the political leadership the upper hand. It gave bright and energetic young bourgeois a reason for choosing politics as a vocation, and gave a rationale for older bourgeois to mentor those on the way up. Further, it created a moral standard in their use of

power. Not everyone stuck to it – there were the Askins and the Nixons – but at least a standard of public service existed, and both the political and the business leadership could be held to it.

The neo-liberal attack on the welfare state in the 1980s did more than end the social compromises of the postwar decades. It also fatally weakened the ethos of public service in the capitalist class. First, it promoted a radical egocentrism (preferring to call it 'individualism') which denied the primacy of the common good. Second, it promoted a cult of the market as the only legitimate steering mechanism for society – thus undermining policy-making, social negotiation, and any conception of politics as long-term thinking. Third, by attacking the state as such, and discrediting bureaucracy, redistribution, planning and regulation, neo-liberalism undermined the institutional machinery through which decision-making in the public interest could actually operate on the world.



There is a great secret about neo-liberalism, which can only be whispered, but which at some level everyone knows: neo-liberalism does not have popular support.

How this doctrine became dominant in the ruling class is still not entirely clear. No-one in Australian politics played the 'Menzies' role, though Thatcher played such a role in Britain. Michael Pusey (*Economic Rationalism in Canberra*) has traced the rise of neo-liberalism within the federal bureaucracy. The hegemony of finance capital must be part of the explanation for its spread in business. Also relevant are events in the expanded system of higher education characteristic of developed capitalism, such as the rise of

the MBA and the model of the generic manager, and the successful propagation of Chicago-school monetarism among economists.

An alternative consciousness for capitalists had been provided by progressive liberalism (of the Keynes/Myrdal/Galbraith lineage). But this ideology was weakened by attacks from the new left and the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In a long perspective, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs appear as the last political alternative generated by capitalism before the tide of neo-liberalism rose. Yet the Great Society was destroyed by the cost of Johnson's war in Vietnam, and the social and cultural struggles that war created. So the global politics of capitalism undermined the social compromises that might have sustained a reconstructed welfare state.

One way or another, the cultural rationale for an autonomous, ethically driven capitalist politics was destroyed. A diagnostic sign is the stranding of Malcolm Fraser, a late bearer of this kind of politics – as hostile to unions as any neo-liberal, but principled on race relations and strong on the ethics of public service. Fraser is now as isolated on the Australian right as an Easter Island effigy on a hillside.

The 'relative autonomy of the state', to use a famous phrase from the late days of the welfare state, was thus demolished. Not by a reversion to direct rule by capitalists (that has happened more in the former Soviet countries); rather by the digestion of politics, along with other institutions, by the market. Politics becomes just another business, another route to profit.

(Therefore to complain about the Howard government's lack of ministerial responsibility and violations of 'Westminster' conventions is wasted breath. Of course you don't resign unless you are forced to. That would amount to giving away the profits you have earned in your business, and what businessman is mad enough to do that?)

The problem is, politics is not the best business. The profits are limited and the costs in time and energy are relatively high. The real talent, the real energy and creativeness in a neo-liberal generation of young bourgeois, would be likely to go where the real money and adventure lies: into businesses like developing property, the new communications industries, global finance. It is noticeable that since the rise of neo-liberalism, there has been a sharp decline in the quality of the leadership of the conservative parties, and the quality of their recruits. Politics now gets the second team.

This is, I think, the underlying reason for the character of Howard's ministry. Talent, energy and commitment, so far as they emerge in the social groups from which the Coalition is recruited, are increasingly unlikely to go into politics. The ideology that provided cohesion and direction for political cadres of the ruling class has been destroyed. The result is the triumph of short-term thinking, philistinism and self-interest. That is enough to produce clever electoral manipulation. It may not produce much more.

This is, of course, not the only change in the ruling-class leadership. The familiar dynasties of Australian business are struggling, if not dying, in the new environment. The Fairfax dynasty went down when its scion decided he was a neo-liberal lion, tried to re-privatise the public company, and got eaten by the real predators of the 1980s. The Packer and Murdoch scions have done their best to be egotists and entrepreneurs, and have succeeded in acquiring trophy girlfriends and wives. But they got burnt in the new telecommunications market. The Murdoch empire could shrug off the One.Tel blunder, but old man Packer has had to reassert personal control, and it is clear his succession strategy is disrupted.

New groups are appearing in the business leadership, as I have suggested above. But so far they have failed to establish any political presence in Australia, beyond a spreading disquiet at the divisiveness of the Howard government. This may in time grow into an alternative, but it has certainly not done so yet. The stalling of Costello's leadership bid, and the decline of the Australian Democrats, which a few

years ago provided a vehicle for middle-class 'conscience' voters, show the current difficulty of articulating an alternative.

Support and vulnerability

IF THE STRUCTURE and politics of capitalism have been changing, it follows that the conditions of opposition have been changing too. The final chapter of *Ruling Class Ruling Culture* offered an account of 'the pattern of hegemony'

in the postwar decades which rightly stressed the historically contingent character of hegemony, and pointed to some of the fractures or tensions within the system in the 1970s. But it was principally concerned with the way Australian capitalism had stabilised itself, how opposition – especially working-class opposition – had been divided, and how consent was manufactured and social control achieved.

With the rise of market ideology, the issue of consent takes a new form. There is a great secret about neo-liberalism, which can only be whispered, but which at some level everyone knows: neo-liberalism does not have popular support.

There has *never* been popular demand for privatisation of public institutions, for deregulation, for the run-down of public services, for indirect taxation, for globalisation, for more markets and wider commodification. New-right leaders, from Thatcher and Reagan to Howard, Kennett and Bush, have come to power because they seemed strong, or tapped into nationalism and racism, or because previous governments imploded and became vulnerable to electoral manipulation. But in power, these leaders have had to introduce neo-liberal policies without popular backing, as have Labor neo-liberals.

The implementation of the new ruling-class agenda, therefore, has depended crucially on two things. One is the ability of the political and business leadership to accomplish structural changes by essentially administrative means, or by controllable mechanisms of assent.

Thus the big privatisations have been carried through by legislation in a party-controlled parlia-



ment, and the creation (by consultants) of a business consortium to market and underwrite the shares. This process is declared a success when the issue of shares is fully subscribed. This validation involves an appeal to people with money, the share price being pitched to encourage subscription. In a successful privatisation the initial investors are, in effect, bribed – with public assets. People without money to buy shares, i.e. the majority of the popu-

lation, are nowhere involved. Had there been a plebiscite about privatising Telstra, it would probably have been lost.

The other condition for the adoption of the market agenda is the absence of an alternative. That there was 'no alternative' to the neo-liberal direction was frequently proclaimed by Thatcher, Keating and Douglas in the 1980s, and has become in a sense true.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the steady restoration of private enterprise in China, have eliminated the external alternative to capitalism – even if that alternative mainly consisted of a military dictatorship with pretensions. The decline of late social democracy, and the shift of labour parties to neo-liberal positions, has eliminated the internal political alternative. Finally the absorption of most public-sector management into the corporate elite, by the combination of intimidation and bribery that neo-liberalism blandly justifies as 'incentives for performance', has neutralised the institutional alternative represented by the public sector.

These factors have created an *appearance* of total triumph which is important in current politics. But the neo-liberal settlement is not fireproof. There are a number of points of vulnerability.

First, the political leadership is vulnerable. The Kennett government lost legitimacy, the Howard government seems in process of losing legitimacy now. The last two federal election wins have been by small margins. Even if Howard were to go and Costello were to come in, there is not much depth in the leadership to deal with future trouble. A muted social democracy is making a comeback in Europe, and it is

striking that Labor (admittedly half neo-liberal now) keeps winning state elections in Australia.

At a somewhat deeper level, the neo-liberal 'reforms' that have stripped the state apparatus of much of its steering capacity have also reduced the political leadership's capacity to determine major events and set the continuing agenda. The political initiatives that set the terms of day-to-day politics increasingly have the character of stunts. The *Tampa* affair will serve as example. These events, disastrous as they can be for the people directly involved (in this case the refugees), do not flow from long-term policy (which hardly exists any more). It is the short-term effect that is wanted. Governments thus become more vulnerable to long-term crisis tendencies which they have less capacity to deal with.

In time, people see through the stunts. A consequence is the current almost universal contempt for 'politicians'. As recently as twenty years ago this was different. Figures such as Fraser, Anthony, Hayden, Wran and Hawke may have been hated by their opponents but they were socially respected.

Naomi Klein's bestseller *No Logo* documents the scale of cultural manipulation by contemporary business, and the growing intrusiveness of advertising. As more and more cultural space is occupied by spin doctors and advertisers, the audiences come to believe that they are always being manipulated. A simmering distrust results, well illustrated by the current helpless bitterness against the most visible part of finance capital, the banks.

Underlying this, again, is the spread of market relations and the digestion of other organisational forms into the corporation. The necessary consequence of this change is that more and more of social life takes the alienated form of commodity exchange, governed by a calculus of self-interest. Deepening alienation probably makes, in the short term, for political passivity. But the long term may be different. An increasingly angry, turbulent and violent population seems quite likely.

Finally, the corrosion of democracy, while necessary to force through the redistributive agenda that lowers the social wage and increases the concentration of wealth, carries long-term dangers. The institutional system becomes less stable as the process goes on. Companies collapse. The new managerialism is less restrained than the old system but the managers are no smarter. When workers and residents are excluded from social decision-making, so is their knowledge and inventiveness.

Opposition

THESE ARE vulnerabilities in the system. But where is the social force through which the system might be transformed? Socialist discussion has always focused on the working class, and in this country, on the role of the Labor Party as a mass expression of the working class.

The ALP's capacity to serve as a vehicle of working-class mobilisation has now been declining over a long period. It is remarkable how persistent the class roots of the party have been – they are still reflected in the geography of the vote, in the trade union connection, and in Labor's electoral successes at state level. But in terms of articulating working-class consciousness and social identity, the Labor Party has now reached a zero point. Its movement towards neo-liberalism has switched that language off.

Labor would, however, fracture its electoral support by a naked commitment to the interests of finance capital. Hence the attractiveness to the Labor leadership of 'third way' politics, which quietly accept the expansion of the market and abandon socialist (or even interventionist) economic policies, while attempting to build a non-market alternative in civil society by community development processes. Social-democratic parties pursuing this approach gain an electoral advantage by remaining more inclusive and tolerant than the conservative parties on non-economic issues – a lesson Kim Beazley forgot under pressure, openly pursuing racist votes in the 2001 election.

The vision of society implicit in 'third way' politics is one of social diversity without social structure. Society consists of a formless agglomeration of individuals and groups pursuing diverse lifestyles, represented in the public world by a spectrum of pressure groups. Presiding over the scene is a benevolent elite who strive to 'manage' conflicts, moderate the most scandalous inequalities by a scaled-down welfare state, ensure each group has a place in society (combating 'social exclusion' is a key task), and facilitate the smooth working of the market. There is no place in this vision for class struggle. Unions are present, but only as one pressure group among dozens of others. Corporate executives are to be left to get on with their business.

Yet the working class is still there. Greatly changed over the last half-century – double the size, ethnically diverse, changed in gender relations and industrial composition. And now without a political voice.

One of the most frightening features of the current era in Australian politics is that a good half of the population have essentially no political representation at all.

Strange things are happening in this political and cultural vacuum. The most vocal working-class revolt in recent years was the campaign by South Sydney rugby league supporters against the exclusion of their team by the corporate managers of this (now completely commercialised) sport. In terms of formal politics, it was Howard who presented himself as the friend of the 'battlers' against the 'elites'. Hanson gained some urban working-class support, as well as rural support, for her campaigns against Aborigines and migrants. If One Nation had been a little more competent we might now have a racist political movement on the scale of Austria or France. Yet to everyone's astonishment, the most openly racist government on the continent was thrown out in the last Northern Territory election.

There are, of course, other articulations of opposition than the traditional forms of working-class politics. Among them are Midnight Oil, Mardi Gras, 'Good News Week', the Ernies, post-structuralism, the Sea of Hands, Blues & Roots at Byron Bay, home schooling, home birth, the movement against genetically modified crops, alternative health, Greenpeace, queer theory, self publishing, ethical investment, sup-

port groups for refugees, the campaign for the ordination of women, Napster (until it was nobbled), and, of course, *overland*.

The fact of such diverse and culturally lively oppositions is surely important. What is deeply problematic is that many, perhaps most, of these groups and movements have little connection, not just with the labour movement, but more broadly with working-class people. Few of them have a significant presence in ethnic minority communities, and few of them have much connection with country people. Without those links the opposition remains interesting but not formidable.

I think the dynamics of contemporary capitalism will make those connections possible. The union movement has declined, in terms of its workforce coverage, as the arbitration system was dismantled; but it has become more socially diverse and representative. The neo-liberal assault on the welfare state has produced, for society as a whole, not more freedom but more inequality. (There is indeed more freedom for a privileged minority, but most people experience this only as spectacle – a spectacle commodified, since the market does not miss a trick, in the celebrity gossip glossies which have now displaced the traditional genre of women's magazines.) The spread of the corporate form and the market may produce more entrepreneurs, but it also pro-



"...Some rural branch stakeholders to see you, sir..."

duces more alienation. So does the collapse of the ethos of public service in some of the remaining structures of the state. There are, then, continuing – and in some respects growing – bases for class anger against the contemporary ruling class, however muted or indirect its current expressions may be.

Finding constructive directions for that anger, and making connections with the many new articulations of opposition mentioned above, is in part a cultural task. It requires validating rather than de-legitimising struggle, even when the struggle takes unfamiliar forms (e.g. culture-jamming, movements for Internet democracy, refugee support groups). It requires exploration of alternative visions of society and of our possible future –

working in the dimension of utopian thinking, which both neo-liberals and third-wayers have been at pains to discredit.

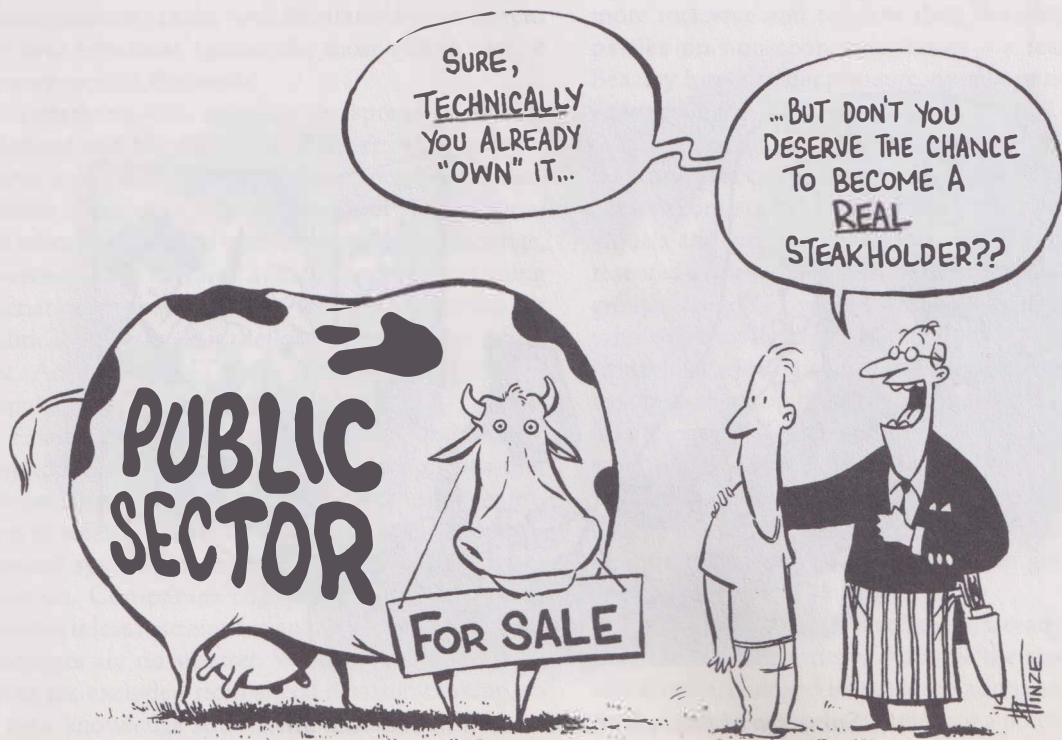
In this work, intellectuals have an

important (though not exclusive) role. To repeat a thought from twenty-five years ago which still seems true: in both critique and construction, socialist intellectuals have a great deal of work to do. Understanding the changing structures of power and privilege in this country is a central part of this work. For this reason I believe that this initiative by *overland*, far from being an exercise in nostalgia, will help us chart paths forward.

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*Moloch! Moloch! Robot apartments!
invisible suburbs! skeleton
treasuries! blind capitals!
demonic industries! spectral
nations! invincible
madhouses! granite cocks!
monstrous bombs!*

Alan Ginsberg, 'Howl'



From the Railway Canteen

Barry Hill

For Martin Kingham

The quiet hour when you've missed the country train:
As the city falls quiet, between trams, and that man
Down there, the solitary one by the tram window
Is inward like you, half-shaven, thinned
And also making his way home in mid-life,
And looking out, perhaps, for a civic life;
Off he goes, to bell and cable spark
As if his future belonged to Electricity.

Trots and Tote in the bar. Five screens with the same
Prices. Barmen in security-guard orange.
The man behind you saying to someone:
"Since you're my supervisor, I'll buy you a drink."
The lucky one is silent, and, you hope, ironic.
Not like the young fella in your line of vision –
Number two clippers, long-legged, pale, downcast –
Crumpled like his cloth bag at his big-booted feet.

Languid not sad in that slump. At ease
In some lugubrious way. Not betting. Not reading – see
Waiting for his mobile to ring. Yep. Nup. Cool.
He might be home soon. His kid at the gate
For him. He's someone else's lad, too;
The son of a man who rode a bike to work,
Smoked makins, saved coins for phones, was shy
On the phone, needed three beers to glow in talk,
Paid his union dues, read the paper sceptically.

You wish you knew what's in the young bloke's head.
His boots, their caps, are powdery white. Flour, plaster or
cement? Is he workaday gangly indoors or outdoors
With those ropey arms and coltish tendon of neck, his lope
(Even as he sits)? Hey mate, you could say, if you
Still knew how to say, waddya do for a quid? Except that

For all you know he's on his way to a new shift
And is tired already; he's done twelve-hour stints all week
And headed for some fall, his clutch at the rail

Will be too late, his barrow took his weight with it,
The bucket tipped, they don't make crampons for steel,
Height's not the issue but youthful ignorance of tiredness is.
One minute you can be traversing a glacier in style
Next hurtling like a tent peg into a crevasse
The blunt end, head first, over and over into the dark
Just the random weight landing, finally:
Splayed, that far down, as a dog falls, one's life
Viewed through the wrong end, now corrected, of the telescope.

I look at a young man and wonder: how will I die?
When and how well? By what means or lack of means?
By falling or being, somehow, raised up, albeit by a hook
Or the gentle, exquisite hand of the musician I love
And who loves me, like, I hope, that young man is loved,
And the men who have fallen to their deaths around town:
On that corner, and over there, four blocks off, or down here
Near the railway track, at the wharves amongst the cranes
Where plumb weights, thick as blood, sacks hooked and
Swung, where things are inched and heaved in life
As weights or no weight at all anymore.

Let me just say
I can only hope he's had a good day at the Commission.
That he was able to stand up to the Bench.
Not at the Bench, but to the Bench.
Not, yes Your Honour, if it please Your Honour, but
No Your Honour that is not what I said, I said this not that
And what I mean by this is this. And so on, with boots on.
So saying and casually clicking his heels so that the dry
Cement falls off, and a fine white powder rises with his words,
And travels on the breeze of his clear speech towards His Honour.

His Honour coughs. He is allergic to dust.
This is not the clean air proper to Commissions.
Imagine. The young man, a pylon, paints a picture.
He has a video machine to help him. The lights dim.
The Commission is all ears, the Judge alert (he has not broken
For lunch yet), the QCs are back on their haunches as
The film runs, camera panning girders, the sound track

Rattling gears of cranes, the pull of images clamping
The mind to each rivet and the plank carrying the mortar
In the barrow on the last run when, all of a sudden,
Like an ad break, the smashed body waits
Far down, at the bottom already, and how did it get there
Exactly, with so many safe grilles and ladders up to the blue sky?

More black there is on the front benches of a Court
Than at some funerals; more solemn still the mood of a Bar
Made to watch grief unfolding at a worker's funeral;
The video of glimpses and glints at the graveside: scarves,
Throats of motherly women, girls' faces buried
There; lipstick eaten away; piercings, leather, silver in a tooth,
The thin lips of a man who might resort to punching
Air; the diamond patterns on a tie loosened
From a cardigan; a Bolle mirroring collar, priest,
And verdant clumps of turf yet to be packed down.
The banner unfurled back at the cars: its splash of history.
One gold cigarette lighter doing the rounds, then back pocketed.

Whoever filmed those shots shown to the Commission
Was Bertolucci with flies on. Panning can't make art of death,
Nor studs do justice to brutal fact, but that's what
The young man oversaw, bless his arms and legs.
He screened no-art for the Bench which has no art
To speak of (it has obligation, mainly,
And the dangerous largesse of the dramaturge).
He rolled out images for them like wet cement
And sat back with his mates in court to watch them set.
There was art in that.

Is that all, Mister Who Ever You Are? said His Honour.
(Or Mister So and So, if His Honour speaks his mind.
The language of swine takes a quiet turn in the court.)
No, Your Honour, it is not all, at all.

Silence in the court. His Honour did not speak. The men,
Those with hard hats at their feet, didn't move. What then?
I propose Your Honour to have a minute of silence for the dead.
What dead? The question swirled in His Honour's eyes.
But he knew, they all knew, even those bent under wigs,
The profession half-held itself in abeyance, as if for Daumier.
For what can be done when nothing can be done

To rule out silence? His Honour was nonplussed
As the workmen slowly stood. The creak of seats
Was like the wheeze of a QC needing Ventolin.
Then the relief, as one true silence set in.

Outside, the Botanic tram, the Leunig tram and the black tram
Trundled past as if locked in tandem wheel-hiss.
Inside, the screensavers of three laptops surfaced with fish,
A beach on a tropical island, a gentle blinking starscape.
And the breathing. Some knew their own breath, some not.
His Honour saw the slow hand of his rule
Make its insect way around the face
Of the court clock, and felt, in that passing of time stolen,
The fiery itch of the longest minute of the State's duration

From

to

And

back.

Back almost. That's what happens in good time.
There's a return without repetition, or farce,
Then a going forward into new history. There is a
Beginning somewhere in the air of the design,
Like scent in the flower, or sap in new wood, like kissing
Long and deeply the open face of the beloved
Beneath you in a pregnant love of time suspended,
Then time moves as dolphins do in the waves
That make them, their time claimed by bold diving,
Their breath and brain in the arc of their own futures,
Each wave-curve composing their seas, their oceans . . .

So.

The whole fluted minute there in the court swelled
Until its surface gloriously broke
Into the other moment,
The next wave of different silence. After that –
A microcosm later, a middle C of silence in mid-air
Hovered over the Bench.

Where were they now on the stairs of experience?
Thank you Your Honour, the lad says.
And sits, at ropey ease again,
The workers lowering themselves, in memory of their dead mates,
Back onto their seats, their own benches, with gravitas.
There. Done. Boots heavy with foot shuffling triumph.
And then another silence, a very different one,
Since each silence is as different as each breath in war and in love:
This one is of speech aborted, a Commission royally thwarted.
Finally His Honour says, this was out, utterly out of order,
This is not done, the court does not mourn in this way, ever.

The rest is History.
The lad is carried into the plaza on shoulders of men.
His Honour retreats to chambers. TV crews, keen eagles,
Shoot cricket captains and the Vatican well,
But none so well as a young building worker carried aloft
For the cameras and us – us outside the court and swooning still
From that silence, and the idea of its aftermath:

Sun-lit speech in comradely daylight.
Communitas on a beautifully engraved concourse.
A city honeycombed with trust, fraternal airs.
Socrates among the hard-hats. Or, even better,
Old Walt strolling among his 'roughs' and all,
Not arguing, at ease, no cross-questioning,
His warm hand extended for all work, play,
Democratic vistas of smile, cognizance. Why,
Even the city-square pigeons are shoulder to shoulder
Knowing how to cast, or not cast, their votes well . . .

I am riding the last train home across the lava plain.
Passing around the refinery, the petro-chemical parade
Of I.G. Farben, home past the old swamp and new
Sewage works, rattling west towards the ocean and
Logged forest, sitting with my back to the setting sun,
Watching the city catch the last light, its glass towers
Demanding homage, their refractions suicidal, insurance
Kaput: a city fading from sight in the long dusk.
Travelling back to my library and my garden,
To the remote, open silence of the solitary singer.

Glory Days

Janine Little

THE FAMILY IS COMING in for the weekly visit today and I'll soon be in the room with the other blokes from C-block, stripping down to my jocks and lining up for the screws. You might laugh and think I'm having a go, but I mean the rubber glove search we get going out and back in, not the ones the King Pin gives you if you're on remand and haven't set up your protection, like me. Lucky, my old football glory days did me good in here.

Word got round the Murrie blokes that I was Kev Felton from Inala. King Pin tried it on, like he does with all the whitefellas new inside. That was until I got his best brother and gopher round the throat in the showers. I put my meanest footy field snarl right on him to leave me alone, or I'd rip his head off his shoulders and shit down his throat. They took the word back to King Pin that I was solid, a brother from Inala, and he's left me alone, the big black mountain of a bastard, as long as I give him half my pouch of White Ox on buy-up day. Anyway, I've got my two kids' picture up in front of me on my cell wall, above my desk. Guess you can say I finally got my desk job, like my ex-missus always wanted. She's the reason I'm in here, or the kids, since they got me for stalking when I went one night to see them with some grog under my belt and a hammer in my hand. Just let her try and stop me. They had all my phone calls recorded, and visits written down, and the cops came and got me from work one day, locked me up and here I am. Glory Days, that was that song by Bruce Springsteen, The Boss. A voice like an out-board motor in a steel drum full of water.

Here's one right here, as I was saying, when the family comes in and mum blubbers all over my prison browns and dad asks me how the barrister's going with my case. Sometimes Val comes too, my second eldest sister, and Rose, the oldest, with the smashed crab face and a heart of gold, but always mum and dad. Every Friday, twelve till two, but they start at the front at half ten with the searches and metal detectors and shoes off, and we start at nine, with the roll calls, strip searches, waiting, looking. Some blokes don't get visitors, but they're usually the long stretchers, doing it hard because their women have pissed off and their families aren't around. I've done nearly four months, and my case comes up next week. Dad paid for the barrister that this Chinese bloke in here told me about, one he always uses. He's in for stealing cigarettes and selling them in his restaurants. David Le, not the barrister. He offered me a job driving for him when I get out, but you get that in here. You meet people you'd never cross paths with outside, career crims, murderers, con artists, but no-one ever asks anyone what they're in for. We only want to know about the child molesters, and the screws tell us who they are but not the cop bashers. We see *them* on the news, when all the blokes cheer and treat them like movie stars when they get here. The State Government's own booking agency for crime, I reckon. If you don't have your contacts when you get here, you'll be in the know by the time you leave. Naw, I'm not working for no Chinese warlord when I get out. Things are gonna be different, I can tell you, just like I tell mum and dad.

We sit there in the visits area under a plastic roof, at a mission brown picnic table on grey plastic chairs, and see them come in, mum and dad always eyeing the double steel fence and the swirling barbed wire. Hugging and bawling and kids running everywhere with Thommo on camera duty taking polaroids of blokes in their browns with their girlfriends and sprogs hanging off them. Mum brought Kara, my little girl, in here once and I told her not to bring her back because it ripped at my guts seeing her grubbing round on the concrete, looking for something to play with, asking me when I was coming home. She's only three, just turned, and I was in here when her posh bitch mother and my six-year-old boy cut her cake with her dragon of a grandmother running the show. My boy told me about it, when Julie let me talk to him. Another Glory Day, her feeling guilty she put me in here, my boy screaming at her that he hated her for sending me away. She let him talk to me when I rang. They've got this recording on the line here that says, "This call originates from Oxley Creek Correctional Centre. If you don't wish to proceed, hang up now." I laughed my guts out when I heard it. That's what she and her evil mother always wanted, didn't they, but now they let me call because, shit, what harm can I do while I'm in here?

So, back on track, and don't trigger, I say. That's what they teach us in Anger Management. Don't trigger, don't let them press your buttons when they know what ones to press. I was teaching him to headbutt, like I did on the footy field. Focus on their eyes, I told him, and aim hard at their scone. That wasn't good enough for her, either, like me and my family, and she put a stop to it, like she did us. Dragged out of the gutter of Inala, she said, and didn't want them in our house. She let mum and dad come over, probably because they were so keen to show her and her mother they were all right, even if they didn't have a swanky unit on the Brisbane River and three million bucks in three different banks. My sisters, they were another story. No airs and graces there, with Val and Rose, you get what you see and take them as they are, or grief comes your way sooner or later.

There's Rose coming over, first to grab her seat and start the waterworks, then mum hugs me and hands me some Winnie Reds and a Coke, then Val and dad, the only ones not crying. Val stopped crying about anything after she got away from shit for brains who took her driving in the bush one day and spun the car round and round threatening to run it up a tree. Me and Bill, that's my big brother the ex-Queensland amateur golden gloves and now single dad on the pension, we paid him a little visit one day and knocked him clean out. That was that. Now Val's coming to see me inside, with dad sitting next to her talking about access visits and child support and it all gets mixed up about whether it's Val's kids or mine, her ex or my mess. We're all thinking it, me, Val, Rose, dad. What's wrong with us Feltons? Why does our family run into more drama than a 'Neighbours' episode on TV? We think it, but we don't say it, because of mum. She won't hear about anything like that and boy, if anyone ever says something to her about me being inside, she's up them for the rent like a bull terrier after a pig. She reckons it was all Julie's fault, and hates her guts like she hates anyone who says anything bad about me, even dad. He's onto me, I reckon, and knows I did wrong, but he never lets on. He just talks about the same stuff every week, even now, when I'm penned up like an animal with the lowest of the low, he's on about football as if I'm training.

"Look's like you're getting a bit of flab, are you doing any weights?" he asks, not looking me in the eyes but at my arms.

"Yeah, but I'm on kitchen duty so I have to go in the middle of the day and they won't let us use any dumbbells in case a fight breaks out," I tell him, remembering how he'd drive me at the gym to do ten more, and call me a girl if I whinged.

"Well, when you get out you can come home and do some proper training. You don't want to end up a fat slob like that useless mongrel Robbo next door," he says, and it makes me feel like shit because I'm waiting for the old stuff he went on with about road work and my ex footy mates and it doesn't come.

Just like my big day in Sydney never came, when I could run on in a top grade match and they could all see me on TV in prime time, a prized son doing them all proud. I'm nothing now, nothing to write home about.

Dad gets back on my case, or to *the* case, just in case I forgot where I am.

"What do they reckon's going to happen on the day? Will you get out for sure, or will you have to do more time?" he asks, for the third time this month.

"It's a two to five stretch if I don't, and I've only done about four months. The barrister reckons it's all up to what the judge makes of the psych report," I say, and regret it straight away because I catch mum, Rose, and Val's faces all drop like I'd just confessed to murder.

Mum jumps straight on it and wants to know why they're doing a psych report on me and are they trying to make out I'm mental in the head, and why don't they do one on that vindictive bitch who put me in here.

"Just shut up, Kit, for Crisesake. I'm paying for this," snarls dad, his face going red and him all uptight now, as he calls it, and Val rolling her eyes at me.

"What do you mean you're paying for it? If you're talking about your bloody money I don't care what it costs as long as they get him out of here," says mum right back at him and I know she's in for it later, when they get home.

"Aw come on, don't get upset you two, let him tell us what it is first," Rose chimes in and reaches for the Winnie Reds mum got me. I can't keep the pack in here anyway, so she may as well pinch them.

Dad glowering at mum, mum's lips looking like a cat's bum, and Val smirking. Reminds me of Christmas Day in Inala when we've all had a few and the heat gets to us.

My head's going a million miles an hour about the psych report, the Psychiatric Evaluation my solicitor ordered for me so he could have something to tell the judge about me when my case comes up. I

read what the psychologist woman wrote about me, and she reckoned I was an obsessive personality with low self-esteem, but I can't tell them that. She said dad was a disciplinarian who beat me bad when I was a kid and so taught me to use my fists to solve my problems, but I can't tell them that either.

They wouldn't know what the big words meant anyway, but I looked them up in the dictionary since there was nothing else to do after lock-up but read, and think.

One bit in there I couldn't work out was something about us, our family, and she used these words, socioeconomic and pathological, and said what I told her about not feeling good enough for Julie's hoity-toity family. She reckoned I played football so I could feel successful or important, and she was right about that but where does it get you when your game goes off and you get older? Sometimes I wish I was Rose or Val and only had to have kids and never having to worry about pleasing dad, or being Big Kev Felton. Mum and dad's one last hope, once a media star, and now they don't talk about reading in the paper how I was in jail for stalking. Once a Warrior, like Jake the Muss, and just as big a drinker when I get out of this place.

So I tell them the report said I was a good family man and how I cared about my kids, and see mum and Rose all proud. Dad and Val just sit there looking at me. They know I'm gone and so do I, and so we've taken back our hope from the two to five years that will crash it like a brick on a cockroach when they hand it to me, soon. At least it'll mean dad will go easy on mum later on, telling me later, on the quiet, how this is killing her and how they lie awake at night worrying about what's happening to me in here. That comes as they take their turns saying good-bye, and dad mumbles with his mouth next to my ear about watching my back and staying strong. Just like he used to do before I ran out onto the field. Keep your head down, he'd say, and remember why you're there.

Australia, East Timor and the Aborigines

Genocide, Denial and Disclosure

IN 'SENSES OF PLACE' (*overland* 166), Marcia Langton criticises 'Left' viewpoints on Aboriginal issues and also on East Timor. These two important controversies merit more attention across the political spectrum. Along with others like Neville Bonner and Brian Manning, Langton deserves praise for her contributions to both issues, and for insights on the links between them. I don't agree with all Langton says. But she comments fairly that the left is often comfortably urban and lacking in first-hand experience of rural issues; that few white leftists have experienced the racism to which many Aborigines have been subjected; and that many lack full understanding of Aboriginal perspectives on self-determination, reconciliation, justice and restitution. She points out that the left has long supported Aboriginal civil, labour and land rights, but adds that rural "white labour interests" kept it "almost completely silent" about continued classifications of Aborigines as wards of the state, increased unemployment, and other factors forcing Aboriginal people into dependency on social security payments.

Langton notes that social democrats and conservatives provided key legal assistance to Aboriginal land rights claims. She agrees that the Australian Labor Party is "half right": "strong and correct in their policies in favour of the rights of Aboriginal people", but unlike the conservative Coalition, "weak and wrong in relation to the breakdown of responsibility in Aboriginal society accompanied by passive welfare dependency". Coalition leaders "better understand the problems of responsibility" but are "antipathetic and wrong in relation to the rights of Aboriginal people". What is needed is "for the rights favoured by the ALP to be added to the responsibilities that are understood by the Coalition". Langton also states that, when she argued for Timorese self-determination, supposed "grand men of the left" in the Parliamentary ALP proved "doctrinaire, politically and

morally wrong", even seeing East Timor's independence movement as led by "half-castes" – recalling similar dismissals of Aboriginal leaders.

The Timor and Aboriginal issues are indeed linked. Moreover, during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor from 1975 to 1999, Labor and conservative governments alike took the line of least resistance – and worse. In the Senate on 7 April 1976, Neville Bonner recalled his visit to Timor just before the invasion, and his meeting with the Fretilin President and other leaders:

I spoke with these people for some time. I believe that they identified with me because of my pigmentation of skin. I was a coloured man and came from Australia . . . They confided in me many things . . . many of their problems . . . What they were seeking was simple and perhaps could have averted a lot of the bloodshed . . . Unfortunately my endeavours to meet with the Prime Minister at that time met with rebuff . . . I also endeavoured to convince the then shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs but he likewise, I feel, rebuffed my efforts to convey to him the true situation in East Timor.

Had Australia acted then and acceded to the requests . . . I believe that a lot of the problems that the East Timorese are facing now could well have been averted. What was put to me by both the then President, or the man who claimed to be President, and what in our way of speaking might be termed his executive was that they had a feeling very deep towards Australia, and that there was a need for humanitarian aid . . .

Now the members of the Fretilin movement to whom I was talking . . . wanted Australia to send this aid to be distributed impartially throughout the whole of East Timor. They wanted Australian people to go to East Timor, to observe and to talk to all the East Timorese people to ascertain for

Australia the true situation in East Timor . . .

In their hour of need where were we Australians? . . . I believe that all of us, both the previous Government and those who were then in Opposition and who have since become the Government, should hang our heads in shame.

Bonner's criticisms of the ruling parties are apt (though not across the board – Tom Uren and left backbenchers Ken Fry MP and Senator Arthur Gietzelt were important exceptions). Outside government, many on the left, with independents like Bonner, helped to report the Timor tragedy and contributed towards ending it, and many have long worked hard for land rights or helped expose the genocide and other injustices suffered by Aborigines. By contrast, as we shall see, a number of Australians on the political right led a sustained, twenty-five-year campaign to cover up and deny the Timorese tragedy, while other conservatives have waged an escalating campaign to deny the Aboriginal genocide and oppose legal restitution or land rights.

The differences are encapsulated in a late 1970s outback scene, sketched by Darwin trade unionist Brian Manning:

As the crowd were walking up the hill, we could hear a car speeding towards us. EVERYBODY DOWN, Denis yelled, and we all dropped to the ground, hidden by the tall spear grass . . . Except Topsy Secretary, an Aboriginal elder of the Larrakia people who along with Fred Fogarty had come along in support. Without hesitation Denis applied a classic flying tackle and brought her to the ground. The driver would have been watching the road and wouldn't have gazed up to his left on the sweeping curve.

This episode was part of a five-year campaign to maintain radio contact with the beleaguered people of East Timor. After invading the territory, killing the six Australian journalists there, and imposing a

news blackout, Indonesian forces were closing in on the Timorese resistance, led by Fretilin.¹ Almost the only news of the resistance in East Timor was broadcast from its radio mounted on the back of a donkey in the rugged highlands. The weak signal barely crossed the Arafura Sea to the Top End of the Northern Territory. There Australia's Coalition government, in appeasement of Jakarta, attempted to block the transmissions and prevent their contents being passed on to the outside world. It was fear of official surveillance that brought Topsy Secretary to the ground in the outback that day.

In 1974, Denis Freney of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) had come through Darwin en route to Timor, before returning to Sydney to establish the Campaign for an Independent East Timor (CIET). Freney wrote that Manning, also a CPA member and founding Secretary of the Darwin Trades and Labor Council, was "able to see the importance of the independence struggle in Timor more than anyone else I had met". Manning and Lai Con Liong, a Timorese-born Darwin wharf labourer, travelled to East Timor for a week in May 1975. Leaders of the Fretilin independence movement passing through Darwin stayed in Manning's caravan. A few weeks before Indonesia's December 1975 invasion, CIET shipped six radio transceivers to Fretilin in Dili. Manning kept a seventh in Darwin and was able to receive details of the first killings after the Indonesian landing. But the next month, ASIO seized the transceiver operated by a Timorese in Darwin.²

Manning moved his radio operation into the outback. It was another three years before Indonesian forces tracked down and killed the Fretilin leader, temporarily silencing the radio broadcasts. During that time, with the help of other wharf labourers, CPA activists, local Timorese Toni Belo and Estanislau da Silva, and Queensland-born Aborigine Fred Fogarty, Manning kept open the radio link to the closed territory.³ Australian federal police, in years of wild emu chases through the outback, pursued this unique team

Article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such:

- a) Killing members of the group;
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

who were playing an undiplomatic role – informing the world of an unfolding tragedy. More than 120,000 of East Timor's 650,000 people perished in crimes against humanity that meet most definitions of genocide and, arguably, the UN legal definition of genocide of a 'national group'.⁴

Two decades later, in the run-up to the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, the international spotlight focused on Australia's Aborigines. Prime Minister John Howard had served as Treasurer in the 1975–83 government that enforced the crackdown on radio contact with East Timor. He now refused to make an official apology to the Aboriginal people for their dispossession and the genocide that the Human Rights Commission ruled they had suffered under previous governments.⁵ Howard offered a personal expression of regret, but public pressure mounted for an official apology. At this time, the US Bureau of Indian Affairs accepted "moral responsibility" for the "sorrowful truths" that "the United States enforced its ambition against the Indian nations", waged "war on Indian people" by "threat, deceit and force", and committed "acts so terrible that they infect, diminish and destroy the lives of Indian people decades

later, generations later". Now, a Clinton official said, "the legacy of these misdeeds haunts us . . . These wrongs must be acknowledged".⁶ But Australian domestic defences withstood this foreign example. As the Olympics opened, Howard made no apology to Aborigines. Instead, conservative columnists and publishers backing his refusal launched a media campaign to deny that Aborigines had suffered genocide.

The Australian attempts to cover up mass murder in East Timor and deny the Aboriginal genocide both involved groups associated with the conservative journals *News Weekly* and *Quadrant* – though neither exclusively nor unanimously. Domestic politics and foreign diplomacy often intersect. A view current in official circles was, "If we criticise Indonesia for its takeover of East Timor, they could have a lot to say about our treatment of the Aborigines".⁷ One result was, in Beverley Smith's words, "a conspiracy of silence between two established orders".

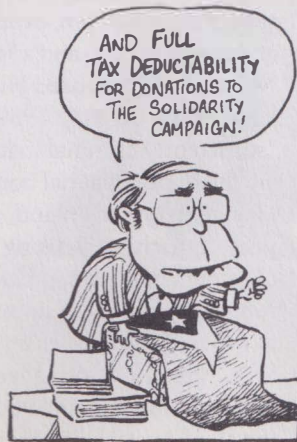
Denying or downplaying genocide is not the exclusive province of the right. Communists had denied the evidence of Stalin's mass murders in the USSR. In the case of Cambodia, leftists welcomed the 1975 Khmer Rouge victory and rightists resisted

25 YEARS FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM!

IT IS 1976, AND A YOUNG, IDEALISTIC MINISTER IN THE FRASER GOVERNMENT DEFIES HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES BY JOINING ACTIVISTS IN THE TOP END-MAINTAINING ILLEGAL RADIO CONTACT WITH THE TIMORESE RESISTANCE!



THE FIRE WITHIN BURNS NO LESS FIERCELY IN 1982... WITH THE NATION'S PURSE STRINGS NOW IN HIS HANDS, HE CUTS ALL AID TO THE INDONESIAN MILITARY!



BY 1989 HE IS SIDELINED ON THE OPPOSITION BENCHES... BUT IT IS HE WHO EXPRESSES THE NATION'S DISGUST AT THE SIGNING OF THE TIMOR GAP TREATY WITH INDONESIA!...



AND SO, ON THE EVE OF THEIR VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCE IN 1999, IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT IT IS HE, AS PRIME MINISTER, WHO FINALLY FULFILLS AUSTRALIA'S PROMISE TO THE EAST TIMORESE!...



their 1979 defeat.⁸ In Australia, international anti-communism fostered denial of two genocides committed by non-communists close to home. Yet critics of these genocides included other members of the Australian right, as well as independents and leftists. Support for the Timorese and the Aborigines, as for the victims of Stalin and Pol Pot, came from many viewpoints, including religious groups. A small but diverse team kept open the radio link to Timor. For a quarter century, however, influential Australian anti-communists helped cover up or deny the mass murder there. Why? The tragedy ended only in 1999 when Howard, bowing at last to public opinion, sent troops to Timor's rescue. What were the motives of his influential backers who meanwhile denied the genocide of the Aborigines? How were the two causes linked?

The Timor Tragedy

THE WEAK RADIO SIGNAL between East Timor and northern Australia was not the first connection between the two countries. Australians had fought in Timor during the Second World War, when possibly fifty thousand East Timorese had perished under Japanese occupation. The victims comprised about 10 per cent of the population of the small Portuguese colony. Australia's consul in the territory in 1962–64, James Dunn, called this "one of the great catastrophes of the Second World War in terms of relative loss of life."⁹ Australian troops who battled Japanese forces there in 1942–43 have always been grateful to the Timorese who supported them, especially in light of the deadly Japanese retribution against Timorese after the Australian withdrawal.¹⁰ "In areas where the Australians had been active, villages were razed to the ground and whole families wiped out," Dunn wrote.

Years later, the commander of the 2/2nd Independent Company, Colonel Bernard Callinan, still remembered the debt his men owed the Timorese. He named his Australian home 'Belulic' after his former headquarters in Timor.¹¹ And after the 1974 coup in Portugal raised hopes of Timorese independence, Callinan wrote that Australian veterans "would feel betrayed by an Australian government that made a facile decision on the future of these friendly, loyal and courageous people". He urged, "Our Government should ensure that at least ample time and facilities are given them in their time of uncertainty to determine and express freely their desires for the future".¹²

Sadly, self-determination for East Timor was a quarter century away. In mid-1975 the leftist Fretilin won 55 per cent of the vote in village-level elections.¹³ But Australian governments supported Indonesia's brutal invasion of December 1975, which caused the deaths of 120,000 Timorese by 1979.¹⁴ As in the Second World War, the Timorese had to fight on alone.

And unfortunately for them, Colonel Callinan had changed his mind about their right to self-determination. In April 1975, along with Australia's Joint Intelligence Organisation, Callinan is said to have advised Fretilin's then coalition partner, the UDT party, to quit the coalition for an 'anti-communist' alliance with a tiny pro-Indonesian grouping, Apodeti.¹⁵ In a reversal of his initial call for self-determination, Callinan wrote in 1977: "Having lived with, and closely with, these people, I am convinced that East Timor is not a viable independent nation. To talk of these people exercising a 'free choice' is to be quite unrealistic..." By 1981, according to Patrick Walsh, Callinan was "the only ex-commando who was in Timor in World War II to publicly support East Timor's integration into Indonesia."¹⁶ Why did he abandon people he once saw as friends? The answer lies not in East Timor, but in Australian anti-communism, including its specific domestic features, coupled with US policy towards Indonesia.

Australian Anti-Communism and Asia

COLONEL CALLINAN WAS an important figure in the secretive, right-wing National Civic Council (NCC).¹⁷ Unlike Callinan, the Council's President, B.A. (Bob) Santamaria (1915–1998), had been exempted from military service in the Second World War, at the instigation of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. During the 1930s, he had been a vocal supporter of Fascism, expressing what has been called an "even-handed" and a "generous view of the rise of Nazism". He opposed Hitler's repression of Catholics, but on 28 May 1939 he denied Germany was "sufficiently criminal in its mentality to desire war", and he opposed aerial bombardment. Following Hitler's invasion of Poland, Santamaria spent the war years quietly organising Australian Catholic anti-communist groups, including the Movement, forerunner of the NCC. He "made no public contribution to debate on the issues involved" in the Second World War. After 1945, no longer opposed to aerial bombing, Santamaria made vociferous statements favouring all of Australia's other wars during his lifetime.¹⁸

Working mostly behind the scenes, Santamaria was an enduring and influential public figure. The Movement, which he led in the 1940s and 1950s, fought communist-led trade unions and sought control of the ALP.¹⁹ Like the Communist Party, the Movement used scare-mongering, ballot-rigging, hounding of dissidents, and *ad hominem* attacks on public opponents.²⁰ The ALP split in 1955. Santamaria sponsored the minority Democratic Labor Party (DLP), which controlled the balance of power in Australian parliaments for two decades. Santamaria's NCC and the DLP both supported the conservative government headed by the Liberal Party and successfully kept the ALP out of office until the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972.

Santamaria and the NCC advanced a mix of principles and policies to lead a mostly working-class Irish Catholic minority away from its traditional Labor allegiance and towards conservative anti-communism. Along with the left, Santamaria opposed the discriminatory 'White Australia' immigration policy, but by contrast he also opposed Indonesian independence from Dutch colonial rule in 1949.²¹

He hoped Australia "could be a major force in the conversion of Asia to Christianity", making "the great sacrifice which will be needed to preserve Australia as a nation of primarily European texture".²² Santamaria warned that "Australia will be destroyed as a nation" by communism, Islam, Hinduism or a pagan occupying power, and in 1951 he predicted war "against the Asiatic countries within ten years". Citing the conflict in Korea, the magazine *News Weekly*, which he edited, warned that 1952 "might well be one of the last years in the history of the Australian nation as we know it".²³

As fighting escalated in Vietnam, Colonel Callinan became an advisor to Saigon's Catholic-led Diem regime, and Santamaria became an early and prominent advocate of the US and Australian intervention. They worked hard to contest the critique mounted by a growing domestic anti-war movement. *News Weekly* ran editorials stating that there were "no children burned by napalm" in Vietnam (April 1967), with titles like 'Napalm? No, Stolen Petrol' (20 September 1967), and 'The Great Napalm Lie Exposed' (27 March 1968). Santamaria argued that "the number of vic-



Conservatives denied the Aboriginal genocide not on the historical facts, but largely because Aborigines had liberal or leftist supporters, corporate opponents threatened by land rights, and an embattled Prime Minister.

tims is minimal, because the Americans have undertaken extraordinary precautions". His preferred explanation for injuries caused by napalm bombing was: "Many children were burned by overturned oil lamps or by the explosion of kerosene lamps into which their parents had poured high-octane petrol taken from fuel dumps".²⁴ In 1969, Santamaria called the slaughter of civilians at My Lai a "battle". The hundreds of women and children killed

were falsely termed surrendered combatants.²⁵ Santamaria regarded Nixon's 1970 invasion of Cambodia as "long overdue" and urged its expansion.²⁶ He dismissed the publication of the *Pentagon Papers* the next year, denouncing "North Vietnamese wolves in *New York Times* clothing".²⁷

Santamaria appeared regularly in the mainstream media and was also active in right-wing intellectual circles. In 1956 he had successfully recommended a Catholic convert and Movement official, the anti-modernist poet Professor James McAuley, as editor of the new conservative magazine *Quadrant*, launched with CIA funding by the Australian Committee for Cultural Freedom.²⁸ McAuley, an expert on the Australian colony of New Guinea, urged officials to "Christianise not Westernise", warned that an independent New Guinea would be "a coconut republic which could do little good for itself", and advocated the territory's incorporation with full citizenship rights in a "perpetual union" with Australia.²⁹ Under his editorship, *Quadrant's* literary content and aggressive anti-communism expanded its intellectual influence, government patronage, and political discretion. McAuley visited Jakarta several months after Suharto's takeover of Indonesia, at the height of the 1965-66 massacre of 800,000 suspected communists, which the CIA privately described as "one of the worst mass murders of the twentieth century".³⁰ In *Quadrant*, McAuley wrote just this: "The coup and its bloody aftermath had resulted in a

strange stalemate at the time of my visit. From such a fluid and ambiguous situation anything can arise, and I shall not speculate upon possibilities . . ." ³¹ Its CIA sponsor had already found *Quadrant* "too right wing", and "wanted to distance the magazine from its regular contributors", including Santamaria. *Quadrant* ignored the advice.³²

In 1968 Professor Heinz Arndt, a former refugee from Hitler now at the ANU and later to become co-editor of *Quadrant*, wrote that in Indonesia "there is still much exercise of arbitrary power by civil and military officials, especially outside Djakarta, acts of oppression, even persecution of actual or suspected enemies of the new regime. But most of this reflects, not the will of the Suharto Government, but its inability or reluctance to assert its will . . . The Suharto Government is genuinely and desperately anxious not to be thought undemocratic, militaristic, dictatorial. It wants to educate and persuade, not to ride roughshod over anyone . . . Indonesia now has a very much more moderate, more rational, more pragmatic leadership than for many years . . ." ³³

Kissinger and Timor

AS IN VIETNAM, Australian anti-communists looked to the United States for foreign policy leadership. Washington supported Suharto's destruction of Indonesia's communists, which *Time* hailed as "the West's best news for years in Asia".³⁴ A decade later, the US was more discreet in backing Jakarta's invasion of East Timor. President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger paid a visit to Suharto on 6 December 1975, and approved the invasion he launched the next day. Suharto told them: "We want your understanding if we deem it necessary to take rapid or drastic action". Ford replied: "We will understand and will not press you on the issue". Kissinger then added: "You appreciate that the use of US-made arms could create problems . . . It depends on how we construe it; whether it is in self-defense or is a foreign operation. It is important that whatever you do succeeds quickly. We would be able to influence the reaction in America if whatever happens happens after we return. This way there would be less chance of people talking in an unauthorised way . . . We understand your problem and the need to move quickly . . . Whatever you do, however, we will try to handle in the best way possible . . . If you have made plans, we will do our best to keep everyone quiet until the President returns home".³⁵

But back in Washington on 18 December, Kissinger saw a State Department cable describing Indonesia's use of US arms in East Timor as violating the terms of their supply, requiring an end to deliveries. He scolded his aides: "I thought we had a disciplined group; now we've gone to pieces completely. Take this cable on East Timor. . . I would not have approved it. The only consequence is to put yourself on record". He feared the cable might leak. "I had told you to stop it quietly." There was no need to record a token order. "I said do it for a few weeks and then open up again." Assistant Secretary of State Philip Habib was more confident: "The cable will not leak." Kissinger retorted: "Yes it will and it will go to Congress too and then we will have hearings on it." Habib replied: "I was away. I was told by cable that it had come up." This dismayed Kissinger: "That means there are two cables. And that means twenty guys have seen it." He warned: "It will have a devastating impact on Indonesia. There's this masochism in the extreme here. No-one has complained that it was aggression. . . And we can't construe a Communist government in the middle of Indonesia as self-defense? . . ." Kissinger feared that the cable "will leak in three months and it will come out that Kissinger overruled his pristine bureaucrats and violated the law. . . You have a responsibility to recognise that we are living in a revolutionary situation. Everything on paper will be used against me. . . to put it into a cable thirty hours before I return, knowing how cables are handled in this building, guarantees that it will be a national disaster." Kissinger asked: "Am I wrong in assuming that the Indonesians will go up in smoke if they hear about this? . . . I know what the law is but how can it be in the US national interest for us to. . . kick the Indonesians in the teeth?" When his legal advisor asked, "What do we say to Congress if we're asked?" Kissinger replied: "We cut it off while we are studying it. We intend to start again in January."³⁶ There was thus no effective interruption of US arms supplies to Indonesia.

Cover-up Down Under

AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATS IN Indonesia admired Kissinger's approach. A few weeks later, on 5 January 1976, Canberra's ambassador to Jakarta, Richard Woolcott, cabled home recommending "Kissingerian realism".³⁷ Like Woolcott and former PM Whitlam, Bernard Callinan and Bob Santamaria now became spokesmen for Indonesia's incorpora-

tion of East Timor.³⁸ Callinan gave priority to regional political interests. He said that "to talk of Indonesia withdrawing is not only unreal, it can also only cause unnecessary friction between Australia and its nearest neighbour".³⁹

Santamaria, according to Patrick Walsh, "actively and continually maintained a public defence of Jakarta over its East Timor actions".⁴⁰ *News Weekly* and *Quadrant* took similar stances. Rather than criticise Indonesia, *News Weekly* assailed its opponents. The Fretilin resistance, the magazine stated, was guilty of "mass executions", including "horrors like the beheading of babies and small children".⁴¹ Santamaria and *News Weekly* falsely alleged that James Dunn, former Australian consul in East Timor, was "a committed supporter of Fretilin", leading a "Campaign against Indonesia", while Jesuit Father Mark Raper belonged to "the vanguard of Marxism".⁴² Walsh described Santamaria's approach:

A report from Indonesian Church sources compiled in late 1976 painted a black picture of 60,000 to 100,000 deaths [in East Timor], widespread opposition to Indonesia and widespread support of Fretilin. Clearly there was a need to keep the source of the document confidential – such information from Church sources in Jakarta was in direct contradiction to everything Jakarta was saying about Timor. Mr Santamaria's 'Point of View' article (9.2.77) claimed that the source of the report "has never been identified" (true) but then falsely claims, "nobody knows who produced" the reports (false). The reason the source had to remain confidential was obvious – but Santamaria used this to discredit the information.⁴³

Two months later, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik conceded that "50,000 people or perhaps 80,000 might have been killed during the war in Timor, but we saved 600,000 of them".⁴⁴

Australians followed three imperatives to cover up genocide in East Timor. First, as he had during the Second World War, Santamaria devoted his energies to opposing communism. He warned that "a government dominated by the Fretilin would extend the tentacles of Communist subversion to Australia's doorstep". An independent East Timor would be "open to Red Chinese or Russian influence, [and] could easily become a base of subversion".⁴⁵ It would sooner or later be "influencing all these repressed and discontented elements" in other parts of Suharto's Indonesia. As in Vietnam, the potential for communist subver-

sion, rather than outright invasion, was the real threat. In this worldview, a critic commented, "even the Catholics of East Timor had to lose their rights",⁴⁶ and Indonesian Church sources had to be ignored. The Indonesian voice Santamaria heeded belonged to what he called "the most influential foreign policy-making body associated with the Indonesian Government": the Centre for Strategic and International Studies headed by Harry Tjan Silalahi and Jusuf Wanandi, who had helped plan the first Indonesian operations against Timor from 1974.⁴⁷

For slightly different reasons than those propounded by successive Prime Ministers Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Keating, Santamaria effectively supported the official view that close relations with anti-communist Indonesia were crucial to Australia's security. Canberra would not risk antagonising a populous, militarised neighbour, even if its regime was committing mass murder. Whitlam and Australian officials and diplomats rejected the argument that Australia should not support violations of international law like the invasion of East Timor.⁴⁸ If Whitlam was moved by *realpolitik*, for Santamaria the key was anti-communism. The combination was persuasive in upholding the policy, but the *realpolitik* proved illusory: like Indonesian control, Australian policy eventually proved ineffective, and both collapsed in 1999.

A third factor was the view of Santamaria and others that Australia's domestic 'left' could not be allowed to go unchallenged, whatever the truth of its case for East Timor. Credible policy criticisms were the most dangerous: silence or acknowledgement of the truth would yield domestic political ground to the left. Given such priorities, the very indefensibility of a policy ensured that it would be defended. Like many international ideologues, Santamaria's priority was not to address problems facing East Timor, but to combat 'communist' influence at home. One commentator remarked that conservative motivations in defending Indonesia "are generally more connected with ideological struggles that are going on in Australia, and within particular Australian institutions".⁴⁹

For these purposes, then, the genocide had to be hidden from view, a tactic the US pursued and one that Canberra aimed to follow. As Kissinger left office, other US politicians stepped forward to cover up what was happening in East Timor. The Australian conservative attacks on James Dunn were echoed in the Congress in 1977. Republican Congressman

Herbert Burke lambasted Dunn and asserted that "it is in all our interests to bury the Timor issue quickly and completely".⁵⁰ The State Department's 1977 Human Rights Report did not mention East Timor, and that year the *New York Times* gave zero coverage to events there, while tens of thousands perished.⁵¹

In Australia, it was far more difficult to hide events so close at hand. Here, by contrast, press coverage was extensive. Domestic public outrage made Timor policy an embarrassment to the government. Anti-communists struck back with excess, ranging from denunciation to denial. In *Quadrant* in May 1976, Heinz Arndt blamed "the left" as "part of the explanation" for the press and public turning against Indonesia. He wrote: "At no stage has there been any assertion by Indonesia of irredentist claims on East Timor", adding that "President Suharto's deference to foreign (and not least Australian Government) pressure to abstain from the use of force may have been a mistake". Arndt joined *Quadrant's* editorial board in 1978. In December the next year, at the height of the tragedy, he published another article, 'Timor: Vendetta Against Indonesia'. Decrying the "unrestrained abuse and wild charges" made against Jakarta, Arndt denounced its critics as "radical ideologues, aggrieved journalists, emotional priests and Wilsonian idealists". But events in Timor had already vindicated such diverse critics, especially James Dunn, whom Arndt considered "motivated and grossly inaccurate".⁵² Just the previous month, Indonesia's new Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumatadja had estimated that 120,000 Timorese had died since 1975.⁵³ The admission did not threaten Canberra's support for Jakarta, but *Quadrant*, like *News Weekly*, facilitated the government's defence of its policy against strong public protest.

Still Suharto's forces could not destroy Fretilin, which they termed "gangs of security disruptors" (GPK). Indonesian commanders in Dili acknowledged confidentially in 1982 that "despite the heavy pressure and the disadvantageous conditions under which they operate, the GPK has nevertheless been able to hold out in the bush", and can still deploy "a very sizeable concentration of forces in one place". After seven years of occupation, Fretilin "support networks" still existed "in all settlements, the villages as well as the towns". These "underground networks are closely related to customs and to the family system". Indonesian commanders aimed "to obliterate the classic GPK areas" and "crush the GPK remnants to their roots".⁵⁴

News of the continuing death toll in East Timor grew, along with Australian public concern. Anti-communist denial became more strident, and the domestic left were still blamed for publicising the story. But it was also more difficult to hold this line, and in 1983–84 a voice of dissent was heard. *Quadrant's* new foreign policy columnist, former Labor senator John Wheeldon, called Jakarta's takeover of East Timor "an act of patently unjustified aggression" without "anything resembling a *bona fide* act of self-determination".⁵⁵ He was responding to a *Quadrant* cover story which had questioned the charge of Indonesian "aggression", and asserted that "there is now no hope that East Timor will become an independent sovereign state". The article's authors called for a negotiated peace, an end to Fretilin resistance, and admission of more refugees into Australia. These authors also chastised critics of Jakarta for "virulence" and "intemperate denunciation", adding: "Those who maintain the pretence that independence for East Timor is still a possibility have in the result hampered efforts to assist the East Timorese".⁵⁶ When Wheeldon responded, Heinz Arndt asserted: "Evidence of breaches of human rights by the Indonesians in East Timor is confined to highly suspect reports . . ."⁵⁷ *Quadrant's* media columnist, Anthony McAdam, praising Singapore and Malaysia as "genuine democracies", lauded Suharto's Indonesia as "relatively pluralistic".⁵⁸ (McAdam pluralistically described himself in *Nation Review* [25 January 1979] as a "socialist", in *The Age* [11 June 1981] as a "liberal", and in *Quadrant* [August 1983] as "a self-confessed conservative".)

Quadrant's continuing support for Jakarta reinforced official policy. John Howard, who became leader of the conservative Opposition in Canberra in 1985, complained that "the preoccupation of the left of Australian politics with East Timor has needlessly soured our relations with Indonesia".⁵⁹ Arndt asserted in the magazine in June 1986 that Indonesia's claim to East Timor was "exactly on a par" with China's claim to Hong Kong, yet Jakarta was receiving a "flood of abuse" motivated by "left-wing hostility" and "racist arrogance". An editorial in March 1987 compared leftist critics of Arndt and fellow members of the "Indonesia Lobby" to "fanatical anti-semites". In July 1995, *Quadrant* columnist Peter Ryan rejoined the attack on "these left-wing lunatics": "The Timor clique increasingly resemble the English prigs of the left in the 1930s . . . Timor is unfortunate, and when President Suharto shuts down

a newspaper it does not make me happy. But it probably makes the ordinary people of Indonesia very happy indeed that he is steadily improving their living standards."

Arndt again excoriated "the fanatical East Timor lobby", for "its perennial campaign of propaganda and disinformation against Indonesia". He asked why have "sections of the Australian Press and public objected so violently to the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia?" Arndt had posed this same question in May 1976, finding leftist influence to be "part of the explanation". By 1995, it had become "the chief explanation".⁶⁰ The right-wing response was defensive. A *Quadrant* contributor who had defended the repressive Diem regime in South Vietnam, went so far as to assert that "even in human rights there is a case for Suharto",⁶¹ who was merely "a monster of the Left's imagination".⁶² After Howard was elected Prime Minister in 1996, his Deputy PM, Tim Fischer, eulogised Suharto as "the man of the second half of the century".⁶³

Arndt claimed that "there is little evidence that the majority of East Timorese want independence . . . The majority who have benefited greatly from very large Indonesian expenditure on roads and other infrastructure and on health and education, so long neglected by the Portuguese, are by all disinterested accounts not dissatisfied".⁶⁴ Just four years later, however, 79 per cent of the Timorese would vote for independence in the August 1999 UN-organised referendum.

As the referendum approached, Indonesian officers and Timorese militia commanders met on 16 February 1999. Indonesian Lieutenant-Colonel Yahyat Sudrajad called for the killing of pro-independence movement leaders, their children and even their grandchildren. "Not a single member of their families was to be left alive, the colonel told the meeting", after receiving orders from senior Indonesian military commanders.⁶⁵ Militia killings commenced the next day. Survivors sought refuge in churches and priests' homes. On 26 March, the Indonesian-appointed governor of East Timor, Abilio Soares, gave orders "that the priests and nuns should be killed".⁶⁶ In Australia, Heinz Arndt again denounced charges of genocide as anti-Indonesian "propaganda".⁶⁷ In Dili, Indonesia's military commander Tono Suratman warned that "if the pro-independents do win . . . all will be destroyed. It will be worse than 23 years ago".⁶⁸ In May 1999, an Indonesian army document ordered that "massacres should be

carried out from village to village after the announcement of the ballot if the pro-independence supporters win". The East Timorese independence movement "should be eliminated from its leadership down to its roots". The forced deportation of hundreds of thousands was also planned.⁶⁹ It was implemented after the vote when Indonesian-sponsored militias went on a rampage, killing perhaps a thousand people and destroying up to 80 per cent of the territory's houses.⁷⁰ Australian public opinion, which had long favoured independence for East Timor, even "if a left-wing group gains control there",⁷¹ finally forced the abandonment of Canberra's policy.

Western appeasement of Indonesia since 1975, including over \$1 billion in military supplies from the US, Britain, and Australia, had enabled the initial Timor tragedy to be repeated.⁷² Even now Douglas Paal, President of the US Asia Pacific Policy Centre, told the *Washington Post*: "Timor is a speed bump on the road to dealing with Jakarta, and we've got to get over it safely" (9 September 1999). It was not this view, however, that Heinz Arndt decried in *Quadrant*, criticising "the one-sidedness of Western opinion, which focused on the hostilities but overlooked the major effort which the Indonesian government was devoting to improving the economic and social infrastructure of the territory" (July–August 2001). In August 2001, the UN organised the territory's first free election. Fretilin won 57 per cent of the vote, close to the 55 per cent it had received in village-level elections before the 1975 invasion. In the interim, 100,000–200,000 Timorese had died.⁷³

The Australian Aborigines

THE AUSTRALIAN COVER-UP of the mass murder in East Timor in the service of anti-communism and misguided *realpolitik* echoes in ongoing denial of the genocide of Australian Aborigines. While the latter springs in part from escalating conflict over material resources on Aboriginal land, it shares the common feature of demonisation of the domestic 'left'.

Australian politicians of the conservative Coalition were not unanimous in support of Jakarta. Liberal parliamentarians Alan Missen and Michael Hodgman criticised Indonesia's invasion, as did Australia's first Aboriginal Senator, Neville Bonner, also a Liberal.⁷⁴ But support for both East Timor and Aboriginal rights was more widespread among independent religious organisations, the ALP, and the unions, especially on the left.

The Aboriginal rights issue emerged slowly against a backdrop of genocide. The Aboriginal population of Australia in 1788 is estimated to have been roughly 750,000. It fell to only 31,000 by 1911, with up to 600,000 deaths following the initial British arrival,⁷⁵ mostly from new diseases like smallpox. Henry Reynolds and Richard Broome plausibly estimate that approximately 20,000 more blacks were killed resisting the white occupation of Australia between 1788 and 1901.⁷⁶ Then in the twentieth century, Australian governments took thousands of 'half-caste' children from their mothers, to "breed out the colour".⁷⁷ From 1910 to 1970, 10 per cent of Aboriginal children were separated from their families.⁷⁸ Queensland's Chief Protector of Native Affairs from 1913 to 1942 aimed to "preserve the purity of the white race from the grave social dangers that always threaten where there is a degraded race living in loose condition at its back door".⁷⁹ The Northern Territory's Chief Protector from 1927 to 1939 advocated eugenics, arguing that by the sixth generation, "all native characteristics of the Australian Aborigines are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes will quickly be eliminated by the complete disappearance of the black race".⁸⁰ At a 1937 Canberra conference of Australian officials responsible for Aboriginal affairs, Western Australia's Chief Protector, A.O. Neville, explained his view to a reporter, who wrote "that within one hundred years the pure black will be extinct. But the half-caste problem was increasing . . . Therefore their idea was to keep the pure blacks segregated and absorb the half-castes into the white population . . . The pure black was not a quick breeder. On the other hand the half-caste was . . . In order to secure the complete segregation of the children . . . [at age two] they were taken from their mothers and reared in accordance with white ideas".⁸¹ Neville asked the conference: "Are we going to have a population of one million blacks . . . or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?"⁸²

As with East Timor, the Aboriginal rights cause attracted early support from the left, and some from the right. From 1931 the CPA denounced the "mass physical extermination" to which Aborigines had been subjected, and called for "absolute prohibition of the kidnapping of Aboriginal children".⁸³ Leftists supported the Aboriginal Day of Mourning and Protest in 1938, the *Catholic Worker* took up Aboriginal causes in 1942, and a human rights movement emerged in 1946. The

next year Santamaria's *News Weekly* decried the mistreatment of Aborigines and suggested they be taught agriculture.⁸⁴ Removals of Aboriginal children continued. Aborigines gained the right to vote in Australian federal elections only in 1963.⁸⁵

Santamaria and other conservatives, initially not hostile to Aborigines, hardened their stance after the issue became restitution rather than citizenship. Many outback Aborigines began to fight for land rights to gain economic autonomy and compensation for their dispossession. The cause slowly gathered support. Santamaria began to oppose Aboriginal land rights activists, whether radicals or religious conservatives.⁸⁶ As substantial uranium deposits were discovered on Aboriginal lands, pastoral and mining company lobbyists opposed land rights, and *Quadrant* authors joined the fray. While many of the Aboriginal movement's leading figures were politically independent, anti-communists often neglected and increasingly opposed Aboriginal causes, while communists, leftists and many liberals were supportive.

The Land Rights Movement

IN 1961 BRIAN MANNING, two Aboriginal brothers, Dexter and David Daniels, and twenty-two other Aborigines founded the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights. They aimed to prod trade union organisations to improve Aboriginal wages. In 1963, thirteen tribes sent the Australian Parliament a bark petition protesting the 'secret' excision from their reserve, for the Nabalco bauxite mining company, of 140 square miles of "hunting and food gathering land for the Yirrkala tribes from time immemorial; we were all born here". They feared "the fate which has overtaken the Larrakeah tribe".⁸⁷

At Daguragu (Wattie Creek), also in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal stockmen received a weekly wage of only \$6.32. In mid-1966 a hundred Gurindji stockmen demanded wage parity and went on strike against the world's largest cattle station, the Wave Hill Pastoral Company, owned by Lord Vestey.⁸⁸ With Dexter Daniels, by then Aboriginal organiser for the North Australian Workers' Union, Manning drove the first truckload of stores to Wattie Creek to support the Gurindji strikers' camp. His 1.5 ton truck, "loaded to the gunnels" with flour, sugar, tea, baking powder, rice and tobacco, "shook to pieces over the rough roads".⁸⁹ The Gurindji re-occupied and claimed their traditional tribal lands.

In 1970 the Waterside Workers' Federation imposed a \$1 levy on all members, producing a \$17,000 donation to enable the Gurindji to fence their land.⁹⁰ In 1972, Lord Vestey handed over 90 square kilometers, and soon sold another 3,250 to the government to be given to the Gurindji.⁹¹ When he joined the Campaign for an Independent East Timor in 1974, Manning was working with the Larrakia people and their traditional elder, Bobby Secretary, who were claiming tribal land in Darwin.⁹² His actions made connections between domestic and foreign concerns that others worked hard to obscure.

Bob Santamaria and his anti-communist allies, by contrast, believed that Timorese independence, acknowledgement of Jakarta's crimes against humanity, recognition of the genocide of the Aborigines, or redress for their dispossession by granting land rights, would be first steps down a slippery slope of communist appeasement. Just as he denounced leftist and Jesuit supporters of the Timorese, Santamaria now campaigned against the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) which took up the land rights cause. Among his targets was the Aboriginal priest Pat Dodson, who in 1980–81 headed a joint taskforce of the CCJP and the Australian Council of Churches on Aboriginal land rights education. Dodson left the priesthood in 1981 and later chaired the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Like its left-liberal counterpart *Meanjin*,⁹³ during its first decades *Quadrant* had run some thoughtful pieces on Aboriginal themes, including a critique of "the inability of Australians to come to terms with their genocidal past" in which "settlers systematically destroyed the blacks" (October 1975). But now the rise of the land rights movement met conservative opposition. Western Mining Company executive director Hugh Morgan campaigned against Aboriginal causes, especially after he became President of the Australian Mining Industry Council in 1981. An anonymous *Quadrant* article in May of that year accused "sections of the affluent middle class" of "a guilt complex about the Aborigines which at times assumes grotesque proportions". The author compared the Aboriginal tragedy "to that of unemployed youth, drug addicts, deserted wives and other groups of victims". Criticising advocates of "cultural convergence", the author asked: "How does a platypus converge with a sheep dog?" As for land rights, "History, to have been there first, is a weak ethical basis for claims to possession . . . Australia is today . . . what the descendants of white settlers have made

The Australian
attempts to cover up
mass murder in East
Timor and deny the
Aboriginal genocide
both involved
groups associated
with the
conservative
journals *News
Weekly* and
Quadrant.

it. It is they, not the Aborigines, who have established the more substantial claim to possession". Aborigines merely needed help to "rise from their present state of backwardness and misery". When Bob Hawke's Labor government came to office in 1983 proposing uniform federal land rights legislation, *Quadrant* proclaimed Aboriginal lands "better suited than almost any others in the world for disposal of the nuclear waste materials which the world's ever growing nuclear power industry will generate" (October 1983).

Quadrant contributor Elizabeth Durack wrote in January 1985: "Sad as it was for both mother and child, most, if not all Aboriginal women, were resigned to the idea of their half-caste children being taken from them . . . Many came forward with them as babies or youngsters and tearfully presented them to the Mission or to the recruiting parties that went through the stations and out-back towns collecting pale-skinned infants and placing them either with white foster-parents or in Church orphanages. Aboriginal women were well aware of all this. That was why they *had* half-caste children. That was what they used, as opportunity arose, their bodies *for*".

On the next page began Roger Scruton's argument against land rights. He described "the *Untergang* of the savage" as the "inevitable" result of "a weak culture confronted with a strong one", adding: "we shouldn't even contemplate undoing the supposedly illegitimate settlement". It "would have happened anywhere . . . when finite, mortal beings, imperfect beings given to evil, settle anywhere – they destroy as much as they build". Scruton asked, "Whom was the land taken from? [and] what makes the Aborigines now alive, the true inheritors of the ones that are dead? . . . The only thing that the present Aborigines have in common, if anything, with those from whom the original land was taken – if it were taken – is their race". Restoring land to Aborigines "introduces an element of race hatred, at least in the more primitive white Australians".

Quadrant columnist Anthony McAdam attacked John Pilger's 1985 film about Aboriginal suffering, *The Secret Country*. McAdam wrote that "terrible things were done to Aboriginal people . . . just as I believe terrible things were done to many whites". But he ridiculed "the now fashionable charge of 'genocide'", and denounced "this exercise in national denigration" as an assault on "the nation's honour". He added: "Pilger's apparent use of the Aboriginal issue to play on 'white guilt' for political purposes other than the one at hand appears to be an increasingly fashionable stratagem" (October 1985).⁹⁴

In a May 1992 *Quadrant* article, Robert Murray denounced "inaccurate clichés that seem to be rapidly settling into the national consciousness", including 'Myth 1: Aborigines'. He posed "the big questions: Did we steal their land? And did our forebears commit 'genocide' against them?" To the first question, Murray replied: "Governors and governments nearly always meant well towards the blacks, but at the crunch favoured the development of the country – meaning whites moving into black land . . . Was the land stolen? It's a matter of which way you look at it, but we should avoid being glib . . ." Turning to the second issue, Murray wrote that "settlers in Australia shot many thousands of Aborigines, mainly as grossly overreactive self-defence . . . The shooting of 20,000 Aborigines – or even twice that number, as is possible – in a population of half a million to one million over one hundred years, is tragic and shameful. It decimated communities. But it hardly amounts to 'genocide' . . ."

In 1990, *Quadrant* appointed a new editor, Robert Manne, an admirer of Bob Santamaria though no apologist for Jakarta. Meanwhile, with the end of the Cold War, Santamaria's own views mellowed in his last years, and he regretted his former association with James McAuley.⁹⁵ Rejecting the economic rationalism of the New Right, he also revisited some of his early anti-corporate concerns. Manne, too, fell out with *Quadrant's* board after he began in 1996 to print differing views on Aboriginal issues and on High Court judgements in favour of land rights.⁹⁶ Then, in April 1997, the national Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission presented its finding that the removal of Aboriginal children had constituted genocide.⁹⁷ This provoked a right-wing crisis. In June, *Quadrant* literary editor Les Murray accused Manne of taking "the received leftist line on Aborigines" over the previous year. Manne had lost the support of the *Quadrant* 'old guard'. He resigned

a few months later, and has since written: "Over the next three years *Quadrant* became devoted to ever wilder and more extreme attacks on every cause and belief of the contemporary Aboriginal political leadership and its support base".⁹⁸

Olympian Denial

BEFORE THE 2000 OLYMPICS, Prime Minister Howard was reported to be reading *Quadrant* 'religiously', and he attended a conference sponsored by the magazine. In September 2000 the magazine held another conference, on Aboriginal matters.⁹⁹ Onetime leftist Keith Windschuttle introduced a paper which *Quadrant* was to publish over its October–December issues: 'The Myths of Frontier Massacres in Australian History'. Windschuttle looked simply at "the evidence of four events that recent historians have described as massacres", and argued that "only one of them deserves this description". Two he considered "legitimate police operations" and a third (contrary to the finding of a West Australian Royal Commission) was "pure mythology. Not only was there no massacre but there was no good evidence that any Aborigines were ever killed". "Most killings of Aborigines occurred not in large numbers but in ones and twos . . . there were some massacres, but they were rare and isolated", "unusual events" with "their own specific causes".¹⁰⁰ Ray Evans and Bill Thorpe demolished this claim in *overland* 163, but further scrutiny of the argument is revealing.

Windschuttle argued that diaries of members of Stirling's expedition say "they killed only a proportion" of 70–80 Aborigines in 1834 (October 2000).¹⁰¹ Using similar language, he cited Jan Critchett, *A Distant Field of Murder: Western District Frontiers, 1834–1848*, and claimed: "only three events . . . involved mass killings" of Aborigines in Western Victoria in 1834–48, while the Aboriginal killing of six shepherds constituted a "mass killing of Europeans" (November 2000). But Critchett documented eleven events (not three) meeting that definition of a mass killing. (The Aboriginal victims numbered 10, 35–40, 30–51, 8, 7, 9, 9, 8–20, 9 or 10, 6, and 9; Critchett, Appendix 3). Windschuttle also claimed Critchett "counts a total of 200 Aborigines killed by whites" in 1834–48; her book says 300–350 (pp.130–31). Ian Clark, in *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803–1859*, details twenty-one sites where six or more Aborigines were killed.

Windschuttle further asserted: "The notion that the frontier was a place where white men could kill blacks with impunity ignores the powerful cultural and legal prohibitions".¹⁰² But, as Henry Reynolds and Charles Rowley noted, Aborigines were barred from giving court testimony, on grounds that heathens could not be sworn. Only from 1876 were they allowed to testify in NSW courts, and from 1884 in Queensland.¹⁰³ Ignoring this but citing Rowley as "the most reputable historian in the field",¹⁰⁴ Windschuttle also omitted Rowley's many descriptions of the "massacres", "exterminations" and "indiscriminate slaughter" of Aborigines, and of "punitive expeditions" and "war waged against" them, "with all the suspending of morality involved". (*The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, pp.18, 36, 42, 113–4, 151–52, 157; 112, 117; 33, 161; 217; 41, 149.) Accusing a missionary of having in 1838 "invented the notion of . . . 'a war of extirpation'", Windschuttle ignored an 1836 official report to the British Colonial Secretary recalling a "war of extermination . . . here".¹⁰⁵ Instead, he accused Aborigines' supporters, and historians who publicised their tragedy, of having "fabricated" and "manufactured" stories to further their own careers.¹⁰⁶

Just as Heinz Arndt explained that sections of the press "objected so violently" to Indonesia's incorporation of East Timor because support for its independence came "from the left", now Windschuttle pleaded that his opponents dominated the media too. To him, Robert Manne had become "a member of the left establishment", while my article, 'Australia's Aboriginal Genocides', was supposedly "syndicated to English-language newspapers around the world".¹⁰⁷ The reverse was true: I sent it to *The Australian*, which replied on 7 September 2000: "Space is at a premium given the Olympics". *The Age* undertook to run the article, but did not. I placed it in the *Bangkok Post* (10 September). Meanwhile the new campaign to deny the Aboriginal genocide, led by *Quadrant*, was taken up in the Australian mass media by a chorus of right-wing columnists with records of antagonism to Aborigines and their 'leftist' supporters, and easy access to a wide public.¹⁰⁸

Just as Santamaria targeted 'Marxist' Jesuits, Windschuttle denounced the "tradition begun by missionaries in the early nineteenth century and perpetuated by academics in the late twentieth – of the invention of massacre stories". He accused missionaries of lying – not the perpetrator troops, who in one case provided "the only eyewitness accounts"

(October 2000). He criticised the land rights movement as a modern secular version of the same Aboriginal "separatism" previously flavoured by the missionary with "a heady vision of himself as their physical protector". Just as separatism "meant the missionaries would keep their funding and their jobs", so "Massacre stories, then and now, were often invented as ideological supports for the policy of separatism".¹⁰⁹

At bottom, Windschuttle opposes Aboriginal land rights and covers up the history of massacres that strengthens the case for restitution. He recommends assimilation. "Instead of land rights, customary law and traditional culture, most of them want simply to live like the rest of us. The assimilation of the great majority of the Aboriginal population is an accomplished fact" (*Quadrant*, December 2000). Yet some Aborigines wish to live on their traditional land and reclaim it. Denial of their land rights favours white claimants such as pastoral and mining corporations. Denial of the genocide, too, undercuts Aboriginal claims based on justice. It also helped a recalcitrant Prime Minister out of a tight corner at the Olympics.

DENIAL OF GENOCIDE is often a function of simple political priorities – often ones not directly related to the genocide. In many cases the truth of the matter becomes clear and would not be denied, even if it could plausibly be. But in other cases, the stakes prove too high, or the victims too lowly. Revelation of such genocides might threaten a keystone policy (in these cases: anti-communism, *realpolitik*, refusal to redress injustice), require resource re-allocation (land rights), embarrass a domestic political leader (John Howard) or international ally (Jakarta, Washington), or rehabilitate ideological dissidents (the 'left'). In some such cases, genocide can be denied even when intellectually, the facts are undeniable. Raw power, of course, often requires only a figleaf of legitimacy. Policy ploughs ahead and almost automatically, action produces its own apologists. Victims of genocide in small foreign territories like East Timor, or domestic groups with reduced surviving populations, like Australian Aborigines, cannot easily contest geopolitical or domestic government priorities. Media attention to small countries, even those threatened with genocide, is usually insufficient to threaten domestic policy-makers or make them pressure foreign perpetrators, for instance by cutting military supplies, which could have restrained Jakarta but embarrassed a powerful ally, the

USA. Public opinion on foreign policy rarely determines national elections. Likewise, remnant survivors of genocides wield minimal electoral clout. In the Aboriginal case, on such a domestic issue their conservative opponents rebuffed the example of the same powerful ally: US recognition of injustices to Native Americans. Even when media monopolies don't consign the facts to obscurity, governments can often ignore both foreign models and domestic protests by victimised minorities – as well as protests against policies on faraway tragedies.

Genocide is the most serious crime against humanity. No politician wants to be accused of facilitating it. No American politician took any blame for the East Timor genocide, even though the United States armed Indonesia for years while the *New York Times* gave East Timor so little attention that as late as May 1998 it mis-labelled the territory a 'former Dutch colony'. US policy-makers could afford to be laconic. But under greater media scrutiny, as in Australia, policies favouring genocidal regimes require fantastic denials and defences.

In the case of East Timor, for twenty-four years, a few conservatives attempted to cover up the unfolding truth both to defend established Australian and US policy, and to deny 'leftists' political points or moral credit. The plight of the Timorese came a poor third to these priorities. But in the end, official policy unravelled as the brutal nature of the Indonesian regime made stability impossible. Timorese resistance again outlasted a foreign occupier. Far from *realpolitik*, Indonesia's adventure contributed to loss of its international standing and the eventual fall of the Suharto regime itself, with new threats to Indonesian unity and possibly to Australia's security. And in a unique series of events, Australian public opinion, informed with the help of a citizen solidarity organisation by knowledge of the carnage, swept away a bankrupt policy.

In 1999, Australian troops in UN berets dug in on the Indonesian border of East Timor. Just as John Howard, who sent them there, had once served in the Cabinet that policed the communications blackout on Timor, he now termed the memory of the Aboriginal genocide a 'black armband' view of Australian history, recalling Japanese nationalists resentful of 'masochistic' views of Japan's war crimes. Conservatives denied the Aboriginal genocide not on the historical facts, but largely because Aborigines had liberal or leftist supporters, corporate opponents threatened by land rights, and an embattled

Prime Minister. Timorese and Aborigines were pawns in much larger games. The stakes of recognising past injustices remain grounded in the present, in domestic debate, and perennial issues of power.

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- Paul Ormonde, (ed.), *Santamaria*, 2000, pp.103, 98, 68–71, 27, 98–100; Duncan, pp.15–17, 21, 27, 93. For Santamaria's response to Hitler's Jewish policy: Ormonde, pp.77–80; Duncan, p.20.
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 82. Manne, p.40, quoting *Aboriginal Welfare*, 1937, p.11.
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 89. Frank Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, 1978, pp.114-17, 282-87; *The Age*, 21 August 2000.
 90. C. Jennett, 'Australian Aborigines', in J. Jupp, ed., *The Australian People*, 1988, p.229. Manning provided the donation amount.
 91. *Australian Encyclopedia*, pp.1482-83.
 92. see W. Day, *Bunji*, 1994.
 93. Lynne Strahan, *Just City and the Mirrors*, 1984, pp.5-6, 76, 111, 121-22, cf. 42, 48-54.
 94. McAdam became corporate affairs manager for Philip Morris (Age, 11 June 1988); Scruton earned a monthly retainer from Japan Tobacco International ('Advocating Tobacco, On the Payroll of Tobacco', *New York Times*, 23 March 2002, B9); Durack admitted she had "created the persona of Aboriginal painter Eddie Burrup, and exhibited 'his' paintings with explanatory statements in Pidgin", *Oxford Companion to Australian History*, 1999, p.200.
 95. Donald Home, *In to the Open*, 2000, p.109.
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 97. *Bringing Them Home*, p.275.
 98. Manne, *In Denial*, pp.57-9.
 99. Manne, p.113, and 'Bitter Olympic Ironies', *The Age*, 18 September 2000.
 100. Windschutte, *The Age*, 20 September 2000.
 101. Windschutte criticises me for referring to "the 'hundreds of massacres' that took place in the twentieth century" (*New Criterion*, September 2001). No, I referred mostly to the nineteenth: "troopers killed 25 Aborigines at the 'Battle of Pinjara' in 1834. 'Hundreds of massacres' followed over the next century" (*Bangkok Post*, 10 September 2000, quoting Tatz, *Genocide in Australia*, p.16).
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 105. Q, December 2000, p.7, citing the 1838 claim of a continuing 'War of extirpation'; cf. George Mackillop to Col. Sec., 28 July 1836, *Historical Records of Victoria*, 2A, *The Aborigines of Port Phillip 1835-1839*, 1982, p.40.
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Jennifer Maiden

George & Clare Do New York

Author's note:

THERE HAD BEEN odd intimations all day. About 8 p.m. Sydney time on September 11, I was chatting to my friend Chris Farmer on the phone. After describing some strange encounters and vibes over the past twelve hours, we decided the word for that day was 'weird'. As we finished talking, he suddenly added, "And the weird hasn't stopped yet".

He was right. Thinking to sane up and relax, my daughter and I decided on impulse about 11 p.m. to watch a happy family reunion bit (Taylor is finally unchained from the mantelpiece) we'd taped but not seen on 'The Bold and the Beautiful'. We'd not watched much frothy TV, especially at this hour, for ages. The set was on Channel 2. What seemed to be an old tall building was being demolished in morning light in an untidy grey cloud of concrete: a sight many find inexplicably fascinating, as I remarked to Katharine, which was why I supposed it was on the news. At the same time, she glanced vaguely at the screen and said, "It looks like a beautiful sunrise . . . no, wait, it's a smog factory . . ." We switched up through the channels to the shopping and the weather. On the way up, the dull demolition footage was on CNN as well, and I said "There's that building again", more puzzled. This time, it had 'LIVE' on it and was being treated as Breaking News. One realised that two planes had hit. The second tower still stood. Soon, it fell.

For hours, the pressure of events (in my old 'Problem of Evil' phrase, 'the drug of immediacy') anaesthetised the human context with adrenalin. A plane crashed, part of the Pentagon burned. One waited for the next pyrotechnic. But then before dawn the trochaic effect of the unexpurgated commentary connected, with names and descriptions such as that of a lady in a black suit who was now "encrusting the pavement".

By 1 a.m., my daughter had been on the internet checking the welfare of her young New York instant

messenger friends, and was reassured over the next few hours that they were still okay. Then she became horrified at all the visuals of falling people. She finally managed to sleep in the bed next to me after the sun rose. So I summoned my Complete Mental Wall-Out on Disaster survival trick and managed to hold that wall consciously in place as I slept for a while.

I didn't write for a time after that, certainly not about September 11. Then it started to creep into my poems. In 'Missing Elvis 2', the skycrane, who is also the earlier Elvis, explains: "The dope/ they give you in the army makes you want/ to be clear, too", my persona objects: "But not like Li'l Abner!" and Elvis continues, "But didn't the Twin Towers/ feel at first like Li'l Abner, or George W./ in your mind and, baby, don't/ we all have some damn mountain – heart-warm drug and drug of horror – makes/ us simple as a soldier for a time? So,/ okay, I died in mine."

The part of my brain that provides new things, however, was usually still inaccessible about September 11. Then driving along the Monaro and watching the tumbling circus of clouds one day, I thought: what are George and Clare thinking? George and Clare are characters from my second novel, *Play With Knives* and my later notoriously unpublished novel, *Complicity*, or *The Blood Judge* (which I still sometimes call 'Bloody Complicity'). Anyway, George Jeffreys is a Probation Officer turned Human Rights investigator, also a true descendant of his namesake, the Hanging Judge at the Monmouth Assizes. Clare is his former Probation client and sometime lover (George has acute ethical awareness but relative ethics) who as a child murdered her three younger siblings. The two could clearly do New York and in the process, with the freedom of fiction, the horror-inhibited portions of my mind might speak. This also made sense since the almost universal response to September 11 was that it seemed like fiction. To enter and use that response rather than resist it might have a particular value . . . but I needed more incentive.

Then at the Varuna launching of Merv Lilley's very good new novel, Ian Syson discussed a possible September 11 *overland* with me and I said I was interested in contributing. Later, I remembered George and Clare and sent him a note. He responded with a request for both George and Clare and my own voice to context them. This seemed difficult but reasonable . . .

Hence George:

NEW YORK DIDN'T LOOK like Beirut, just itself under siege. But such violent sieges and occupations always bring out the essence of a city: freeze it into disparate shadows and encounters in which you can say: yes, I knew that's what it was all the time.

Clare wasn't lost in it for long – but then she wasn't lost at all, only to me as always, as I walked as casually as I could through streets in which crowds were still herding like uneasy cattle, a little too close together, a bit too polite and anxious to please. Clare had been closer to the Towers than I. I'd been at an UN Human Rights meeting. No-one in Security there had reacted instantly, as far as I'd seen. The barricades were just going up as I left. For me, there was the old self-instruction: if you don't let yourself feel anxiety, there will be nothing to be anxious about . . .

From the UN, I tried to remember the way to Liberty Plaza, where Clare had been going to a Medical Rights for Women Workers meeting and where the smoke was, but still high up, so you couldn't see what caused it. I sprinted south on 1st Avenue to 23rd Street. The buses were still running and I caught one to Hudson. Walking south, one realised eventually that one was breathing concrete talcum and that the light, whilst there, had a feathery, tuft-like, uneven quality. Had there been noise? Afterwards, there were rumblings and crashings on the news, but I don't remember noise – as if noise did not exist in this special, grim dimension. The dimension was becoming grimmer as I walked. People were gathering covered in dust and ash, their grey outlines reminding me of Pompeii, or something Eugene McCarthy had said, staring down from his hotel room at the Chicago Riots, that it was "like a ballet of purgatory". It was like a great ballet, too, in that all movements seemed to exist for themselves, like those of animals, with no analogous meaning.

If Clare's prematurely white hair and skin were a biological attempt at anonymity, she had achieved it now.

As she walked towards me, I only recognised her by those strange, dark blue, Coppelia eyes of hers. Even her eyelashes were clogged and ashen. She said nothing: not 'I'm alright', not anything, and neither did I, but a cop was urging "Run north. Get out of here as quickly as possible. Run north . . ." so we gathered up a limping librarian and did so until there was no more falling debris, at last leaving him in a cafe in front of CNN.

We walked south slowly and for a very long time to the apartment we were renting in Greenwich Village, on 13th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues. It was high up and from the corner of a window we could see the burning new ruins in their fumid gap at times.

In bed, she said . . . it seems like a setpiece phrase, but well, yes, it was in bed that Clare, who had become quite extremist lately, did say, "They still won't understand, of course, why this has happened."

I said, "But anyone who analyses why things like this happen is accused of blaming the victim. I've never heard you blame a victim before." Indeed, she had never even blamed her own.

She argued, "No-one ever really blames the victim. It's not about blame, it's just about tasting blood. Both revenge and blaming the victim are about having tasted the blood. And anyway you could just as easily say all those poor people down there were victims of the American Government. What power did they really have over it, and were they ever really warned about what sort of direct revenge its targets were capable of?"

I considered, "George Orwell used to argue that things like the London Blitz were good because the public realised that they weren't immune to what happened to soldiers and would be less jingoistic about unnecessary warfare."

"But it won't sink in. And their logic always comes unstuck on the suicide bombing thing: they can only see the perpetrator in terms of a bad person and they can't see a bad person as being brave. And even more, they have to be able to punish a bad person: being bad is about retribution, about punishment and the death penalty. You have to be able to punish the bad person, otherwise nothing makes sense to them. It's vital to their sanity, their sense of the logic of time."

I asked, "So if the bad person is dead, they have to find another one to punish?"

She asked, "Who?"

I thought about it, "The only vulnerable Big Bad with

a big enough PR Machine at the moment is Bin Laden, so I guess it's him." I sighed, "Darling, they're about to invade Afghanistan."

But she said, "I don't object to that. I don't like the Taliban." She'd become an extreme feminist, too. Something, perhaps, about our time with the Bedouin . . .

I said, "If it stops there. But they need to see an execution, and war isn't about that: it's about war and it always disappoints you."

Downstairs, in an unbearable synthetic stench, the ballet of purgatory continued in slow motion. Slow, reverential archeological digging, slow gaping machines, slow crowds in slow grief, everyone in stylised formation. And insidious around the site lights, the other light like that of a bushfire, rosily oozing its own round clouds.

There were similar images on the TV, plus close-ups of victims, rescuers and rubble and I knew that soon it would be hard for my memory to distinguish the real and the electronic view.

I had blocked so successfully on the anguish that I found I had to re-outline it bit by bit in my head by superimposing Clare's delicate, fragile face and body carefully on that of the victims. Then the anguish hit like a passenger jet and I blocked, blocked, blocked again.

LEAVING GEORGE to re-block, I rang a liberal Jewish New Yorker friend to research my urban geography. In the process, she reiterated her distaste at the President's lack of brain: "I was embarrassed to have George Bush representing the interests of my country", explaining, "I thought Bush's little visit to the rubble idiotic", quoting "We're going to smoke them out of their holes." She asked, "Are we going woodchuck hunting in Texas? The only way a nitwit like him can deal with complex political situations without the culture to understand the historical context is to consider the situation analogous to looking for a bad guy in the Wild Wild West." She continued by lamenting the lack of mandatory education programs for George W. and other world leaders, that there are "complete illiterates governing our fate". She observed that one of the problems in the Middle East was that the Israelis kept on electing uneducated Army Generals who had only military solutions, and declared that she "felt sorry" for Arafat, who was a general, too, but who was also well-educated . . .

This was good quotable stuff. Her most pressing concerns were the way protest against the invasion of Afghanistan had died out under pressure ("instead

of going abroad there should be further diligence on American soil") and "I think something terrible is going to happen in June or July" – a prediction I'd also heard elsewhere. In regard to this, she discussed the ease with which small nuclear devices could be hidden in briefcases.

Most harrowing was her account of watching CNN, weeping for a fortnight and just wanting to go home and help after September 11, and her continuing love of New York: "I grew up there and understand their ways," which are "a different consciousness . . . I'm a New Yorker in my heart and soul."

Intrigued by the breadth of her responses, I asked what she had thought of the Mayor. She qualified first that "Anyone attracted to politics has a defective personality", but that she thought him "visibly shaken and genuinely touched by the whole thing" and that he had "a great love and civic pride".

So there was again a great microcosm/macrocosm dichotomy I had noticed before in intelligent response to this subject. I suggested that the lack of continuity and passion in the current anti-war protests, as opposed to those against the Vietnam War, was due to the nature of the Taliban, and the fact that they had anyway been created by American funding. We agreed that on the whole the Afghan people had welcomed the new war. I affirmed that I thought future protest would be much more viable once the US target was less shoddy and more acceptable to liberal beliefs (the current attacks on civil liberties also therefore seem to me possibly less sinister and less permanent).

I had earlier discussed the Afghan problem with Ian Syson, mentioning Christopher Hitchens, who supports the war in Afghanistan on the grounds that radical Muslims are in opposition to civil liberties. My New York friend also described the difference in attitude between Western soldiers who go into war hoping to return and Muslim extremists who go "expecting to be sacrificed". Later, I explained to my daughter similar suicidal attitudes in the Japanese during the Second World War. And there is anyway something usefully terrifying for all sides about the concept of martyrdom. Martyrs can be employed to terrify and so can the idea of one's opponents being martyrs.

How dumb is W?

EARLIER, I HAD suggested to my New York friend that of course Bush (whom I had described once in a poem as "George of the lethal injection") might

not actually be that stupid, just pretending to be so in order to appeal to his domestic voters. She had agreed, while still obviously favouring the former explanation. I wondered what George would think of W.:

NEW YORK BLACKED OUT, as it was to our north, had the unnatural, secret air of a violently unconscious human being. Sliding her silken face onto my pillow and whispering in some mockery of girlish excitement, Clare said, "Tell me how George Bush thinks."

We'd just seen his smoking holes speech on TV, and I knew I had perceived something extra about him, hoping no-one would really ask me what.

"Well," I said, recognising in my voice a judicial authority which could only be genetic, since I didn't have the slightest sense of personal confidence about it, "he's not a dry drunk like most Australian Prime Ministers, even though his history might suggest that. He's not dyslexic either, although he pretends to be since it's really his only pitch to liberal sympathies. He's obsessed with the need for punishment and revenge because he doesn't really feel that need, which means he has killed often for no passionate reason. He does have a compulsive-obsessive need to finish things, like the Gulf War, or winning an election, and killing in revenge is a form of that, but like any other compulsion/obsession it feels completely unauthentic to the person who suffers it. Hence the twitch – it's partly just the twitch of a bird of prey's beak, of course – the thing about being bred to power – but it's also guilt. You can see the guilt in his eyes and hear it in his voice, in the fraternal, ingratiating rhythms, and the small, flat breaths between the lines . . ."

She interrupted dejectedly, perhaps with autobiography, "Guilt isn't good in a violent situation: you keep on repeating the thing you're guilty about. It's as if that will make it real enough to solve something . . ."

" . . . Yes, and of course the guilt is also for doing what he's told, to get elected, and not knowing all the implications, whether or not he's all that bright, and for knowing, having known that things like September 11 would happen and that no amount of his sort of power – no amount of lethal injections – will ever have any effect on that."

"So you think there's another sort of power he could exercise that would affect that? I mean I suppose you're

thinking of Adlai Stevenson again . . ." (she always liked my old quote from Stevenson that "powerlessness corrupts and absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely").

"Well, yeah, but he's been cossetted beyond any spontaneity. All he has is the intelligence to know he's programmed but not the intelligence to escape."

She decided, "That would fit with him not being able to give or receive mercy. Spontaneity is necessary to mercy, I think." She looked into my eyes in the phantom light from the window and the TV screen and I realised she hadn't looked into my eyes like that for years. I would have liked to have said there was new depth and subtlety, more humanity in her gaze, but of course it was still two brilliant deflecting topaz cabochons I saw. The eternal eyes of a Doer of Good Deeds, one way or another. I whispered, rolling her over onto my chest and tasting the mercy, the mercury of her hair: "And you too have been programmed by your punishment, and have no spontaneity and are not merciful."

HAVING PUT George and Clare to bed, I thought about how *Complicity* had never been published – one publisher arguing about "the chaos of the plot" and that the book was "insinuating". And I thought quite cheerfully, 'I've done it again' – reflecting that insinuations are still more tolerable, flexible and accurate than blanket analogies and that chaos and violence are the inescapable, fluxing practical surface into which we must insinuate our tangled threads of order: hence so many voices in this piece.

So many voices.

My daughter is on her internet instant messenger and confirms with me that she's spelled 'existential' right. She has. I make myself my usual cup of coffee, half strong coffee, half cold water: writer's coffee, straight into the veins. When my friend Chris Farmer rings up, I again agree with him, "and the weirdness hasn't stopped yet".

I turn on the BBC, which seems to have more news than CNN these Time Warner days, and hear the Israeli Army re-attacking what's left of Jenin, the gunfire this time only one way.

Jennifer Maiden is a poet, novelist and critic based in Sydney.

The Glove

Penelope Sell

THE SOLE GLOVE lies on the pile of bricks. It is dirty and worn. Stiff, as if the workman's hand had dissipated, slowly dissolved into the hollow within.

Still life.

A puppet, waiting.

Catherine creeps instinctively, drawn into the perimeters of the building site. With downcast eyes she snatches the glove up, stuffs it in her handbag, and turns swiftly back to the road.

She reaches her car, an old, weathered BMW, and realises she needn't have been so furtive. The site was deserted. Building stopped for the day – at three o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. Early start, early finish. From sunrise they were hammering, cementing, constructing. How satisfying to be a builder, she thinks, to construct such visible, concrete results for your labour. So productive. So useful.

She slides her key into the ignition but leaves it in lock position. Her handbag lies in her lap. She opens it and takes out the weathered glove, holds it.

She looks out the windscreen. Cars and concrete, emblems of a sterile life. Her eye did it, she realises. That eye, living on its own, unprocessed and therefore constantly identifying processes, or components of such, in order to keep its purity.

She touches the glove tenderly. Her white, fine-boned fingers softly follow the creases in the palm of muddied rubber. She strokes up the fingers where rough surface smooths out to shiny tips, almost worn to the underlying fleece. Catherine gently inserts a painted, fire-red fingernail where the stitching has come away. She pushes further and feels inside. It is soft and warm.

Lightly, she places her hand over the entire glove, comparing the size difference. Petite on large . . . clean on dirty . . . cultured on raw.

Holding the glove out in front of her she sees how filthy it is – filthy with dirt and work. She stuffs it back in her bag and starts the car. Detouring, she drives slowly past the site, just in case she can spot him – a one-gloved man. It's still deserted. She drives home.

Parking crooked in the driveway, Catherine goes straight around the back into the bungalow. A printing press, a gift from Dan, takes up the back wall. Another side has a long table scattered with pens, tins of ink, tools, linocuts, and sheets upon sheets of prints and drawings. Catherine's studio is a mess.

Placing the glove on the table she sits down with pencil in hand. The opening at the wrist faces her. She looks at it and shivers. Too close. Way too close. She can see the blackness inside. Uninviting, as if the life of its owner lies in wait, reminding her that this glove isn't hers.

With both hands she picks it up, careful to hold its shape, and places it further away on the printing press. From there she frowns at it. The glove is looking back. A nauseous feeling swells in her gut. Her hand shakes. She leaves the bungalow, her paper blank.

Guilt projected. How else can it accuse her so? But it excites her all the same. Thrills her, in fact, to finally have something to draw that seems so full of life. The labourer's hand. The work through the years, stored and absorbed by the glove. The paradox of construction shown through wear.

Challenged and preoccupied she starts on dinner – something easy like pasta.

Dan returns at six. Always. He supports her financially. She supports him emotionally, domestically, and physically. Three to one, Catherine thinks, fair dues. She has no money and no intention to look for work. Her dream is to be an artist, recognised, at least.

Lately, however, panic has disturbed her muse. She sits in the bungalow all right. But that's all. Sits, tries to create, and inevitably stares at the tools and pens as if they are part of a long uphill battle she had unwittingly embarked upon. And then comes the anxiety. An urgent restlessness which has no place to go. A deep disturbance which freezes her hands, her mind, until it's only her eye, her invisible eye which darts to and fro like something flown out of the cuckoo's nest.

To leave the bungalow would be wrong, and too easy. Old work surrounds her, reassures her that once she had been capable of something. Yet she looks at them in awe. Her drawings and prints present themselves as strangers.

However, the bungalow is her place, away from Dan. Dan lives the most part of the day in outer space. He comes home, eats, exchanges pleasantries, then plants himself in front of the computer to continue his work from the observatory. Staring at dots on the screen. Galaxies, clusters, supernovas, planetary nebulae, binary stars, red dwarfs, black holes . . .

She thought she'd hit gold when she met him. An astronomer! How romantic! It was early in the relationship, when he took her to the observatory, that she realised there was nothing romantic about it. As usual with mankind, an obsession for measuring finites had eclipsed the glory of infinity. The telescope was there, sure, but rarely used. Instead computers – identical screens lined up in a row. Big blobs and little blobs moving fraction by tiny fraction.

"Galileo had no computer," she'd remarked on the way home.

Sometimes she can't bear it. She looks at Dan's back, glances at the screen in front of him, and is propelled outside into the dark where she cranes her stiff neck and strains her naked eye desperate to catch a shooting star, or a glimpse of the truth that life is bigger than her.

Of course Dan is right in a professional way. In the back garden, through his homemade telescope, so much is lost because of city lights, moonlight and clouds. Not to mention atmospheric pollution. Computers are so much more efficient. No, for the most part, Dan is forced to view the universe one step removed.

WORK, one step removed from the sky, has become one step closer to home. Catherine sees the boundaries dissolving, technology replacing.

But these are things you have to put up with, she thinks, as she empties a bottle of tomato sauce onto lightly sauteed onions. The computer as competitor to their manoeuvring, commonly referred to as a relationship.

The glove. She imagines it on the printing press coming to life like in a horror film. Inching its way across the top, climbing down to the floor and creeping into the house.

"What's for dinner?"

"Jesus!" The sauce splashes as roughly chopped capsicum falls in. "Why are you creeping around?"

"Would you prefer I yell out 'Hi honey, I'm home'?"

"Don't be ridiculous." She stirs the sauce. "How'd it go today?"

"The usual. I need to lie down for a while."

"Of course you do."

"Pardon?"

"You must be tired."

"What did you do today?"

"Nothing much. Go and lie down."

"Spaghetti is it?"

"I didn't have time for anything else. I've been in the bungalow."

"I'm sick of spaghetti."

"You sound like a five-year-old."

Dan sighs and sits down at the table. Always so tired, thinks Catherine. All that work, that inert, brain-draining dot gazing. What do they have to show for it? What do all those dots, lines and numbers add up to?

But a labourer . . . a labourer labours. Dan studies, researches, without doubt of qualitative value yet here she is wanting to quantify.

She serves the spaghetti. Not too much for Dan; his sedentary occupation causes him to go soft. He doesn't like food anyway. A labourer, she is sure, would take a generous helping of whatever she had to offer. A large hand, therefore a large frame. Tanned, comfortably roughed up, muscles – but not too big. Healthy, confident, protective.

She looks at Dan. White, weedy Dan trying to swallow spaghetti. Painfully slow. The gloved man would eat quickly. Food's food and its purpose is energy. Energy to work, play . . . fuck.

"Don't eat it if you don't want it."

"I just can't enjoy it. It's so . . ."

"What?"

"Bland. I'm so sick of it. The taste. The tomatoes."

"It's just food. I can't serve cordon bleu every night."

"Just not spaghetti – please. No more spaghetti."

Dan leaves the table and goes into his study. After disposing of his dinner Catherine goes outside to breathe, to feel the chill on her face. She looks up at the sky. Orion looks down on her – his belt and sword. She thinks of the labourer again. A warrior, a centaur, a Caesar. Swiftly she crosses to the bungalow and without looking at the glove begins to sketch it. Thick lines here, crossed with thin, smudge it, more definition, less. She goes on and on. Two sheets, three, four, five drafts before she dares to look at the glove sitting on the printing press.

It looks nothing like her drawings. Her drawings are all wrong. They don't have the life, the paradox. Even the shading of wear and tear is wrong. She puts her pencils down and decides to sleep on it. The door to Dan's study is still shut. Relieved, Catherine quietly goes to bed.

ON A PEDESTAL the glove stands upright on its wrist, fingers spread like an urgent stop sign. A fresh, new, workman's glove encased in glass – a priceless work of art. There is nobody else in the

gallery except her. Dread follows as she approaches.

Inscribed on the pedestal are the words 'Stolen Monument'. Catherine ignores them as she lifts the glass case, expecting an alarm to sound. It is quiet.

She snatches the glove and runs into the corner where she puts it on and wipes her brow. The rubber surface is strangely soft. The glove is strong, directed. It takes control of her hand and rubs its fingers through her hair, down her neck – firmly massaging. It slides around to her front and caresses her breasts before travelling down, firmly, between her legs.

THE QUICKEST WAY to kill love is through neglect, Catherine thinks, in her bungalow, the empty page before her again. But she needs to concentrate on the glove. She's coming at it from the wrong angle. The glove should be upright. If it was upright it would seem more alive. She cracks up laughing as an image of it waving comes to her. Still laughing, she gets off her stool, needing to try it if just for the absurdity. Holding it by the fingers she tries to make it stand, but it just flops down, the rejected puppet. Rejection – perhaps that's the answer. If Dan rejected her she would have to move on. But she knows he'll never leave her, for Dan is a man of comfort.

She goes into the kitchen and comes back out with a potato masher. She places the glove on it. It looks more alive, but stuck. A sign saying stop. She stops. This is ridiculous – if she can't draw the essence, she can't draw at all. Props and pretence have never been part of her game. Why is she starting with them now? Because she can't get it right. Because the glove has integrity and she has none. The glove is talking to her. Stop.

She doesn't want to touch it now. Not even to take it off the masher. It's easier to let it hinder her. The no, the refusal to go. How can she capture work, wear, and the paradox of construction when she knows nothing of these?

A slave to Dan. A slave to the universe. Tonight she prepares steak tartare.

She wonders how it is that raw meat does not make you sick. If you have to brown it to kill off any

surface bacteria, what happens with steak tartare? Perhaps Dan will get sick and bedridden. She's not malicious; she just wants him in a place where there is no universe.

At six the table is set.

"A gourmet dish to make up for the spaghetti," she says, picking up the wine.

He goes to cover his glass but the wine falls across his hand and onto the tablecloth. Dan withdraws his hand; and Catherine fills his glass.

"You have to drink with this dish. It's uncivilised not to."

"I have a slight headache . . . but since you insist."

She detects a note of bitterness.

"What did you do today?" he asks.

"Tried to draw the glove."

"Glove?"

"Yes – this glove I nicked."

"Stole?"

"Well . . . picked up. No-one was using it."

"What kind of glove?"

"A workman's glove."

Dan stops chewing for a second but then continues. Nearly, she thinks. He nearly took the bait. If he asks her why she would steal a workman's glove, she can talk about it without being betrayed by enthusiasm. But he won't. He never gives anything. There is no leeway with Dan; everything is dense. Fear denied by a silent accusation, leaving her with a second-hand guilt. No room for questioning, no room for empathy, no room for Catherine.

"I'm having difficulty with it."

"Where's the aesthetic in a workman's glove?"

"Art doesn't have to be aesthetic."

"Helps doesn't it?"

"Anything can be aesthetic. You should know, being an astronomer."

"I'm not interested in astronomy for the aesthetics."

"Then what?"

"Order. Disorder. New discoveries."

"So . . . you would say you're interested in order, disorder, and new discoveries."

"Didn't I just say that?"

"You were talking about astronomy."

"What are you getting at?"

"Earth."

Dan pushes his barely touched plate away and gets up. "I haven't got time for one of your crazy conversations. That meat tasted like it wasn't even cooked."

"It's interesting that your so-called new discoveries actually happened billions of years ago. A new galaxy, a new black hole. What you call new is very, very, old news for the universe."

"I have to go and work now. I actually need to do this to earn money."

She'll let that one go, as she always does. She doesn't want to give money the respect. It's three to one. If Dan's value system is too small to see that, her respect for him is equally diminished.

CATHERINE STAYS at the table and finishes her steak tartare. It's nice. She'd followed the recipe and done it right. She looks at Dan's, and then eats that too. She clears the table, washes up, and goes into the bungalow.

She holds the glove and tries to imagine the hand that fits it. If she can draw the hand, she will understand the glove better. So she sketches again. She tries to determine the muscular pull, the darkness of the hair, the size of the knuckles. But through using her own hand as a guide, the sketch comes out confused. Not the certain, open, working hand she wants but one with a feminine structure – oversized and closed. Appalled at her ineptitude she screws up her drawings and picks up the glove. She holds it against her face, as if trying to talk to it.

A HUGE HOLE in the ground. The beginning of construction. Foundations about to be laid. In the middle of the empty pit there she is with the glove opposite, ready to spar. It curls into a fist and comes flying at her. A blow to the left, and then to the right. She grabs for it, misses, gets struck again. She's bleeding. A momentary pause as she puts her hand to her mouth but too late . . . the glove has her by the throat.

HER GUILT needs to be addressed. Even though it's preposterous – such a petty crime. It is, however, stifling her. She'll buy some more. A brand new pair to replace the single one she took. She can simply leave them on the pile of bricks – if they are still there. She may even spy for a while to see who claims them. Then, hopefully, get on with the drawing.

She rises early, deciding to get there before six so she can make her amends with anonymity. It's a mild morning and the empty roads fill her with an unfamiliar enthusiasm.

She reaches the site and checks for people with a fast broad sweep. Hurrying into the perimeter, she can see the pile of bricks, just as before. The low morning sun hits them at right angles, giving them a rich depth. There is some kind of foliage leaning

against them. She takes the gloves out of the plastic and holds them close to her chest. On nearing, she sees the foliage is a wreath. Resting inside lies another, single glove; the partner to the one she took. A cardboard sign is propped against the bricks, the words printed carefully in red text:

In grief and memory of Jason who died tragically last Tuesday. Top guy. Ace workmate of too many to mention. Loving husband of Diane, devoted father to Jack and Rachael. Rest in peace. United we stand, divided we fall. – B.L.F.

Catherine fumbles with the gloves in her hands. She holds them out to the bricks, hesitates, and puts them back in the bag before returning to her car.

The Vulgar Press

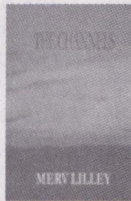
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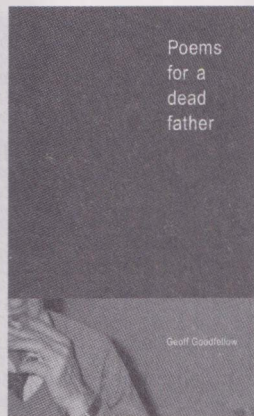
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The Shape of Death

Kieran Finnane

Bodies

I'VE NEVER SEEN a dead body but that night I saw the shape of two – under a piece of tarp, floodlit, late evening on the highway where they fell. The shape was utterly recognisable, its length, bulk, undulations.

The place was just out of town, the night dark & soft. I stared at the mound of death, colourless & cold. The police waved me on. My small son cried all the way home. He said how glad he was to have his life.

I heard on the next morning's news that the dead were a young man & a younger woman. They'd been fighting on the road, drunk. A first couple had stepped onto the road, the driver swerved to avoid them & hit instead the other two. The driver was in shock. I heard later that the young woman's mother had recently buried her husband.

I went to see an exhibition of photographs & by coincidence they'd been taken in the place the dead couple came from. In black & white on bright gallery walls, a place both blessed & blighted. A number of the photos bore the little black squared signs of death, masking faces.

The photographer explained: the young man in this photo (he's standing in the rubble of a half demolished house, strong naked torso above jeans & flash buckled belt, black squared stare) was killed with his girlfriend, run over on the highway, just out of town.

This happened not long after he'd got out of gaol, for killing the children in these photos. (They're running barefoot, spinifex hair, warm dusted skin, black squared cheeky grins.) All three were in the back of a ute which the young man, drunk, was driving.

Ziggy

ZIGGY WAS MY husband's countryman. He lived in a caravan park, worked as a house-painter. On his fiftieth birthday he cooked schnitzels for the park manager's family. We were visiting (our children played together), he invited us too.

We asked him to paint our house. He was a skilled tradesman, told us proudly of his apartment in seventies Vienna. He'd painted the living room purple & traced a fine black spider's web on the ceiling. That had been for a first wife, later he'd married again & somewhere he had a son. He called our daughter 'Little Mouse'.

Whenever we saw him, morning or evening, he smelt of beer. He spilt most of two cans of paint on the verandah. He let the spills dry & painted over them. Now they're starting to show through, that's why I'm thinking about him.

Social Security sent him out of town, to paint houses in bush communities. It was Christmas Eve, very hot & humid, Ziggy was fifty-two. He had nowhere to go the next day & wasn't feeling well. He would have stayed put, but his offsideer wanted to come to town. He persuaded Ziggy into the ute & drove all morning till they reached the only roadhouse on the way. He wanted to stop for a beer. By now Ziggy was running a fever & said he'd stay in the ute. When his mate came out a few beers later, he found Ziggy curled up & dead.

Viral pneumonia was the official cause. Ziggy lay in the mortuary for weeks while the police tried to find his son. They found only that Siegfried M. was an 'illegal alien'.

He was buried out of the Catholic church. A few good men & women who'd never known him saw

him off, & me & the Little Mouse & the park manager's wife. The caravan he'd lived in was taken to the dump, beyond salvaging. He'd taped up the fridge years ago, no-one dared open it. Butts of thousands of cigarettes covered every surface. We remembered the delicious schnitzels he'd cooked in this secret filth.

Albie

ASKIN-HEADED boy watches traffic from Centenary Park. His name is Albie. Centenary Park is a gravel yard between railway & highway, a few young gum trees along its fence, two concrete tables & benches in a corner.

There's not much traffic. Albie crosses the road, stops outside the abandoned roadhouse, next to the service station where muzak crackles in the loud-speaker. The front doors of the roadhouse are half open in the wind, held together by a padlock. Albie stares once more at the old furniture & rubbish in great piles under a thick layer of dust, trying to spot something useful. He catches his reflection in the window glass, polishes the glass with his sleeve to see better, decides it's okay & moves on, his long pants dragging in the dirt, over his bare feet.

He passes the house on the corner. Its paint is still quite fresh, an empty rabbit hutch lies on the scrap of lawn; a swing set, a trampoline, a little truck shine among the weeds. He remembers the morning his sister Paula threw clothes & kids into her car & drove away without looking back. Frank went after them. She wouldn't have him, but he didn't come back either.

At the end of the strip of town a sign announces 'Albie's Plantation'. That Albie was the boy's great-

grandfather. A double row of giant eucalypts shade his old wagon, the bolts all popping out of its weathering wood. Albie sits in the wagon a while & tries to imagine having a job on a farm. It'd be great, he reckons, if only there were still farms around.

It's nearly lunch time when he turns into the town's only side street. As always, he stops at the dark green fence in the middle & looks over it for the row of wind chimes hanging on the verandah. They're the prettiest things he's ever seen.

Patti

EACH DAY PATTI sweeps 'the longest verandah in the Southern Hemisphere'. Steps over its broken floorboards. Starts next on the hallway, hooovers, freshens the air with an aerosol spray. Works until two o'clock, blocks out by sheer will her nausea. When she's finished, she goes to the kitchen for leftovers from the counter lunch. Washes down the food with a middy & starts to feel better. Lights a cigarette. This one is always the best. Then she goes upstairs to sleep.

She used to have her own place. Found it hard to think about cleaning it or even going home to it. Nobody to clean for or go home to anymore. This room is much better. She cleans it just like all the other rooms & at the end of the day it's right there, handy.

She goes down to the lounge at five, knock off time for Di who does day shift in the front bar, & for some of the other girls. Patti starts the evening with a light beer. Di tells them all the gossip. Her boobs almost burst out of her 'Responsible Drinking' T-

shirt every time she laughs. Patti hasn't got any gossip. She's scarcely spoken to anyone since last night. *Mornin', how's it goin'?* That's about all. She laughs when Di laughs & gets another drink.

Di goes to get her chook out of the fridge, she's got a family to go home to & feed. Patti gets up & puts a song on the juke box. Kevin comes in for a chat with the girls. He's a bludging no-hoper, Patti knows, but he puts his arm around her & asks how she is. She puts her arm around him, buys him a drink & listens to him rave on. She couldn't tell you what he talks about but she likes not being on her own.

A couple of tourists come in, a husband & wife. Slumming it, Patti decides & turns away. Sometimes if a bloke comes in on his own, she'll talk to him. She's still got her figure. Her face though, she looks at it sometimes & wonders who that old bag is!

Di's gone but some of the other girls stay on. When they run out of talk they sing along to the country. Patti does a few dance steps on her way to the bar.

This is the time she really enjoys. For just a little while everything looks clean & nice, a bit exciting, she likes herself, likes other people.

Ron walks through from the front bar with his guitar. Patti puts her arm around him, *What can I get yer Ron?* He came upstairs once. Shrugs her arm off now. *Fuck off Patti!* She doesn't care, that's Ron, *Fuck off yerself!* He starts to sing, he's got a beautiful voice. Patti stands in front of him & dances. *Why don't yer learn to drink?* he growls into the microphone. Patti turns to the girls & laughs. They laugh too, a bit. She sits down to finish her drink, then gets up & goes to the toilet.

On her way back she walks past Ron & smiles. *What happened, yer shit yerself?* he laughs, again into the microphone. All the girls laugh too, a lot. Patti feels uncertain. She puts her hand on her bum to feel if her pants are dry. They all laugh even more. She feels dizzy, totters, Ron looks away, she gives him the finger. The nice part's over. She buys a plate of chips with gravy & another beer.



About him

After Ito Hiromi's 'Harakiri'

Upstairs his girlfriend is spraying bugs
with a hissing pyrethrum mist
 & stomping on escapees the carpet's
littered with corpses

She doesn't want his help

He thinks she should

He thinks she should respect the fact he's practical
& killing bugs is no drama you just
 get on with it

He thinks she's too belligerent

"Ha!" "Bastard!" "Gotcha!"

 ring greedily through the ceiling-plaster

He thinks it's bad protocol

 Furthermore

she's wearing a T-shirt & skirt she didn't even
 change

He thinks he would have worn old shorts & a singlet

He thinks he looks good in a singlet

He thinks in a singlet he sees the workout effect

He thinks burpees, press-ups & weights
 are basic

He thinks if she wasn't spraying & stomping he'd go
 upstairs & have a wank

He thinks wanking is private

He thinks lying around on the couch

 drinking coffee & feeling like wanking

while she murders roaches

Is pathetic

He thinks she's set him up

He thinks she's on a power trip

Cockroach Millennium/ Kali vs. Fingers Effete/ no contest

He thinks he's becoming effete

He thinks it might have to do with wanking

He thinks he might feel better if he just went up & took over
 "I'll do this!"

He thinks if he makes a scene she will say he is being childish

Above him she hisses the thuds

drive roaches out of cracks in the plaster

He catches & kills three SPLAT! between thumb & fingers

He thinks he's being childish

He thinks she's manoeuvred him into childishness

He thinks she should be more direct

He thinks she should march right down

 & spray him like a bug

She won't

If he turned into a bug a cockroach

 scuttled upstairs

planted himself between her feet

& threatened with feelers

She might flatten him out with a shoe

 at least do

something about him

Kerry Leves

A Mistake

I made a mistake when I was three or four:
I thought that Elvis Presley came to our house
and tuned my brother's ukulele.
Years later, during Love Me Tender, I turned to Mum
and said, remember when he . . .

And so I make my first quick click
of readjustment as a nine-year-old
sitting on our swirly lounge room carpet.

Then just last night Dad told me of a kid
who had a room at the Eureka
and worked at the Post Office, he might
have slept nights on the telephone exchange.
Not there long, but yeah, he did
look like Elvis come to think of it,
and by crikey he could play the guitar.

Lisa McNeice

freedom

sailing from Silesia
to escape persecution
they took willow cuttings
from that river in St Helena
where Napoleon had paced

planted along the Onkaparinga
at a place they called
the Valley of Praise
the thriving willows
were woven into baskets
so girls who never knew Silesia
could walk forty kilometres
carrying to market
the fruits of their freedom

Miriel Lenore

Turtles

Lost with swollen rats in the grove of banana palms
by the river
older than our solitude

encased in a silence so complete
they forget they carry the bitterness
of earth's memories

in summer as in winter
with such clear eyes
they are swimming towards me.

Peter Boyle

Stardom

Quickly, that night the clouds and moon
whipped each other into an algae meringue
shades of embossed man adjacent or behind
impossible wafts of powder wife to create what
we saw that night soon after a cigarette,
after deciding to trace and watch our
smoke play floss to the setting factory-stack
in the sky, beating women at their own
game before rain just struck us back inside.

And the next part couldn't come quick
enough. Lounge room turned rehearsal room
shut air-tight, seven power points for
eight amplifiers, hence the double adaptor
covering tunes we loved we confessed after
three that it was fun. I couldn't time
the bass part but the rest of the drum kit
went fine. Stars. Realising they'd left
them out above we had to make our own.

William Fox

Two Goodbyes

1.

Surrounded by the younger turks,
saxophonists not trumpets,
Dizzy Gillespie says farewell.

The embouchure has long since now
been leaking at the edges.
The stratospherics will elude him;

it's better not to try.

The rhythm though is tight as always,
the phrasing effortless,

a language he himself has written
with Charlie Parker sitting in
fifty years before.

The humour too is sly as ever –
as now the saxophones cut loose,
joyous in their expertise

and dense with gratitude.

2.

Clifford Brown is twenty six,
a legend to these men already,
the minor league musicians here

who let his trumpet lift them,
those golden triplets spinning out,
the tone as clear as fire.

Fatality is unforeseen;
all logic's retrospective.
The solos of the local guys

are banging now against the ceiling
but never quite get through.
The late-night sound of Clifford Brown

leaps straight on out
and off towards the stars.
In Philadelphia, it's June.

The audience of forty-five
or so is cheering still.
"My God it's hot," he says and smiles –

then steps into the car.

Geoff Page

Country Pub

In my time this was a six-pub town.
Long gone now but The Shamrock still lives.
I breathe the incense of hops and fags,
move through the gregorian race-call chant
and bow my head over the glass lit golden
by the late sun.

Despite the years I recognise the figure
hunched over the Herald. My old self.
We move to make the rusty connection.
I speak about the collapsed marriage.
He asks about the kids. Tells me his
golf handicap is now in single figures.
And I wouldn't know the old house
now the trees are grown.

A silence falls. I push across the car keys.
He rises as the sun drains from the room.
I open his paper and nod to the barman,
relishing the beer tap's double bump
as he creams the head.

Kevin Murray

mourning is women's business

for Tjama

1

with a gesture as large as the planet
you call up the spirits of women
tonight you can see them thousands
filling up the country so it is
no longer empty

and lonely as it will be
when you are gone

and the multitudes no longer
dance across the spinifex

2

you were dancing
a slow skip
in the grand style
wearing a striped pointed hat
and white ochre
all your golden hair
cut to the grey

you go on without them like those
wounded in the leg
limping
dancing towards the embrace of the others
who limping
dance towards you

when the circles of recognition are complete
after days and weeks of sitting in the dust
you can get up wash go home
back to your places of employment

and the free spirit will burst
out of this belly of grief
into the air

3

when you were young you went to law
childless but free
now the funerals string together
narratives of loss
how hard it is
to think any more of forever

sometimes
you want private you want
out fold your shirt over your chest
and yourself up to sleep
your stomach hurts
with grief

when you were young and went about your business
who would have thought it would end
covered in white clay in a row of widows
seeing the land losing its people

your stomach hurts
and it's hard to breathe

Lee Cataldi

who needs street cred?

I'm on the beat
and rhythm cracks the footpath
where my mother's heart
should tango. But that's not it,
is it? The bad mother and the murderess
are here to stay and go,
just as the moon rides its holy grail
across the sky and suddenly,
it's worth it. But there's more
where angels tread, stilettos slashing
the world's evil. Or good.
I'm Kali and I'm mad
stamping on my ex-lover's chest
for maintenance, or overriding
the wrongs of access, I'm woman,
and mother, I've a right.
Any unknown doors belong to me.

Andrea Sherwood

rain

& after
the storm

the wet
heads of

children, dog
shake water

drops in queues
waiting to phone

a cavalry
of parents

the open lines
of a fairy

tale end
of the day

Rory Harris

Trespass against us

Except for you, when we trespassed our
hearts just weren't in it. Firstly, the four
of us searched after the key, hidden
in the apartment's front yard. One friend
told me to lose the hood since we didn't
want to be seen as burglars. Laughing
you didn't so much deny as shove such
caution straight back into his face. The
garden fountain got hyperactive too, water
bubbling upon a concrete shore. You said once,
while rain increased the gorgeous velocity
of street, clouds and chimney smoke, that
life's like this in the English Army. A
BMW and driveway when you're a colonel.
Lofty; just how that arose from a boring
walk we can't explain. But that's the thing,
and once we realised we could get
inside through an open window, all you
did was annoy. Drinking, you made us
at least try to find some lady's vibrator.
We did but it was more Easter egg fun;
an old star of memory that guilt eats up
because it tastes too beautiful. I watched
the fountain 'til dawn perform by a
filtered timetable, went home when the
trains woke up and forgot what I'd done.

William Fox

Going Through the Cards

sometimes they give you the idea that australia is some pure land called 'terra australi incognita' or 'australi felix' stuff like that or they let you think that australia is called cook or murray or white or uk or robinson or howard or dyson or morgan or nolan or jennings or gould or hughes or carey or martin or hanson or woodward or american or –

going through the cards that kind of australia is dissolved in names like arranga or zareski or chan or ng or pitruzzello or karogiannis or truong or wang or zhang or ouyang or xiao or strangio or asuncion or plousi or petrovic or abdulatiff or kovacevic or de jong or ubaldi or van leeuwen or choy or lista or banitsiotis or teoh or wong or kee or da costa or quattrone or moulin or marafioti or mudrooroo or oodgeroo or ginibi or huang –

still all you get to hear when you are put on hold or being put through is this helen or margaret or dick or david or doug or dicky or sam or ian or merv or geoff or peter or simon or les or john or richard or judith or judy or justine or jane or jo or joe or junk or jeff or tom or terry or tony or tongue or tealby or ross or rose or ronnie or roy or ron or rot or raunchy or rainy or ray or ring or james or bill or bob or bunny or kim or king or yvonne or –

makes you wonder what this identity business really is and if a yellow pages is more australian than any genuine anthologies of literature and poetry put together can ever be and if all these bunches of business cards i've spent years collecting in australia – and there are not many years: only nine – are not real australia: realer than either you and me –

Ouyang Yu

Elephant Stones

In the jeep
she tells me about the wild elephants
who've lost their jungle
and now drink the rice paddies dry
or wrap their trunks like pythons
around trucks of sugar cane.
I believe her,
but I'll always remember
the lounging bulk of one
lying quietly on its side in a river
while small boys
scrubbed its mushroom ears
with stones.

Tim Denoon

Melbourne 4 a.m.

She's mostly asleep,
eyes closed, draped around
the bay, supple toes
closed over Frankston,
her head pillowed on the ripple
of hills to the northeast, Kinglake
maybe, where suicides go
to watch the city disappear.

She's drowsing with her other knee
around Williamstown, the bridge
her garter, the empty streets
to the west of her at rest.

She's three hundred parks waiting,
their paths in shadow. She's
the furtive scurry, the dead
elbow of Russell and Bourke.
She's the sudden hush of Carlton,
she's small boats going out
from the port to net those first,
inquisitive fish.

She's a tired pro driving
home to Beaumaris to pay off
the babysitter and then lie down
beside her daughter in the dark.
She's young hips pumping
in the back lanes of Collingwood,
she's someone bleeding on a street
in Reservoir, she's the ancient trees
of Kew pressed knowingly together
over motionless avenues.

She's weary police on surveillance
in Footscray, she's a single father
getting up to rock his son to sleep
for the fifth time. She's the sigh of
Northcote, the scream of Seaford,
she's every driver running
the Brighton lights. She's tears
at Southbank and angry boys
riding the Broadmeadows line.

She's a kiss in Windsor,
she's scarves on the driveways
of High Street.
She's the stolen scent
of roses and lavender
on the rising tide of morning.

She's a wrecking ball paused
above the shells of buildings
few of us will remember, she's
the engineer of the day's first
train arising quietly so as
not to disturb his wife.

She's sporadic traffic necklacing
the river, she's Punt Road
finally slowing down, she's
fairy floss dropped
onto hot cement

She's each of us steering
our dreams as we turn
away from the wall, but
mostly she's asleep,
the bridge her garter,
eyes closed, on her side,
draped around the bay.

Ian McBryde

Tough at the Top?

It's easier with an MBA

POSTGRADUATE BUSINESS and management degrees, especially the Master of Business Administration, are the most frequently advertised courses offered by Australian universities. To satisfy a collecting impulse, I cut out all the announcements of them from newspapers circulating in Melbourne over the first three months of 2001.¹

An ever-increasing herd is corralled in the business paddock of higher education. The mustering procedure can be worked out by looking at advertisements. Some use pictures as well as words. One is headed "*Imagine . . . your career taking off*" (with "*Imagine . . .*" set at an upward angle from the rest of the heading). Below is a photograph of a young woman wearing glasses, seated on a carved chair before an opened laptop computer. She looks sideways and downwards to the right at a tome lying on the desk. Her index finger is in the opened spine, keeping track of the paragraph she is reading or holding the pages apart. Another book is on the desk to the left of the computer; she holds the edge of it open with her left hand. Toward the front of the desk, there is a vase of flowers on the left and a cup and saucer on the right. The desk is side-on to two sets of Edwardian windows looking onto foliage. A student in a garret she is not.

Underneath the picture is "Fast track your career with an MBA", followed by "Now you can do an MBA in a way that best suits you". The degree is offered by campus study, by distance education and online: "This means you can study at home, online or face to face with peers in a supportive learning environment". The headlines are elaborated under "FLEXIBLE CAREER-ORIENTED COURSES" (" . . . flexible business courses tailored to suit your needs"); "ADVANCE YOUR CAREER" ("Increase your chances of promotion with a business course that relates to your job. Learn while you earn"); and "Course Progression" ("The MBA opens opportunities for you in-

cluding promotion and further studies into the Doctor of Business Administration").²

In another use of a photo, a man dressed in car racing overalls, with a full helmet and crossed safety harness, sits before a computer and holds a steering wheel poking out of the hard drive (where else?). "Put your career into overdrive" says this advertisement – "A fast track Masters for undergraduates with a marketing major" and "Ideal for business professionals with or without tertiary qualifications".³ This university offers business programs "which keep pace with change and remain firmly linked to the needs of the future".⁴

Those needs can be your own, as another business school explains: "Let us help you make the great leap forward". Above these words is a tadpole, with small limbs and still with its tail (indicating possession of a Bachelor degree?). Below them is a frog, looking forward and clutching a lateral stem. Maybe the idea is that you get transformed when kissed by the Princess of the MBA. This course "aims to provide you with the knowledge and skills to be highly effective as a manager today and prepare you for a leadership role in the future".⁵

We are constantly reminded of time forthcoming in advertisements. A colour picture, all in blue, has "MBA" above and "Management Education Online" below, superimposed on a starry void. In it are three globes of the world, student variety, in diminishing sizes. The nearest one shows Australia, Asia and a deal of Russia. The next has Africa, with Europe on the upper rim; and the Americas are on the third. The text begins: "Online courses make our leadership and management programs available for the new millennium". The "our" is, as the advertisement says up top, the International Graduate School of Management. Whose school? We are given only a logo, an acronym, a telephone number and an e-mail address; which is another way of saying that the name



and location of the online university are irrelevant when the reader is invited to “be part of this new era of web-based education”.⁶

Locating yourself in the right place by doing the right course is a common device. A Graduate Diploma in Marketing and the Master of Business (Marketing) are advertised with “Position yourself with Postgraduate Studies in Marketing” set over a picture of an index finger and thumb holding a jigsaw piece above the remaining space of a puzzle.⁷ In another, a young man looking sideways and in a rush is superimposed on an enlarged bit of a keyboard. This advertisement, for a Graduate Diploma in Business Systems, announces:

People and Technology . . .
 . . . the E-Corporation of
 today & tomorrow

And below that:

People and technology have been the vital essence of success within most industries of the past and present. This trend will continue to grow and de-

velop with the further introduction of e-commerce and further globalisation.⁸

Gaining advantage is what counts. Picture a giant monitor sitting on a hard drive, with a background of fast running clouds and with 1010100101, and so on, superimposed on them in diminishing rainbow radiations. Near the screen and slight by comparison is a lifelike plastic woman, seen from behind and half-turned right, surf-riding on a mouse over an s-curved stretch of wiring board running into the computer. In the foreground and much larger, is the side rear view of a plastic man, half turned to the left, balancing on his mouse. The headline says that the degree is this university’s Business Advantage. Maybe Barbie and Ken, in day attire, surf the yellow electronic road to a hard-disc nirvana. Any rate, they are riding “The MBA for the 21st century”.⁹

Many advertisements without pictures convey similar advantages – “To lift your skills in Finance”, as one has it.¹⁰ However, a rush of management blood is brought on by the mix of electronics and technology. One university subtitled an advertisement for its Master of Technology Management degrees

(MTM and MTM [e-Business]) with "Harness the Power of Innovation in the New Economy", and continues: "The effective management of technology and innovation is emerging as a key driver of business competitiveness in the new global knowledge-based economy". The MTM degree is offered "to provide business managers with the knowledge base and tools to operate effectively in a world of change".¹¹ Having tools goes along with being businessmen. A Masters' degree in Strategic Foresight (offered by the university's Australian Foresight Institute) is said to be "A unique course aimed at practitioners who wish to develop their professional 'tool kit' to manage the future".¹²

You, the reader, are told that you deserve to be recognised. Now, you can "Come and discover your full potential".¹³ You want to be on the cutting edge. Having taken our course you will "Be at the forefront of the exciting world of eCommerce . . .".¹⁴ The stress is on satiating your hunger to get ahead: "The MBA that leads to a world of opportunities".¹⁵ The MBA section of another advertisement is headed "Tomorrow's Leaders", with "Wealth Creation" above the university's Master of Entrepreneurship & Innovation, and "Upgrade to First Class" preceding its Doctor of Business Administration.¹⁶ "Advanced Courses to Advance your Career" says a College of Law and Business.¹⁷ You are invited to "choose the School that has been voted to not only move its graduates up the career ladder faster but has the best reputation within the business community";¹⁸ and you can choose fast degree outlets: a Master of Business Leadership, "designed for the advanced development of managers, consultants and practitioners", is "completed over one part-time year and is undertaken through an action research project".¹⁹ Another place says about its Doctor of Business Administration degree: "Complete the program with three years of part-time study".²⁰

While no university announces that business degrees are easily as well as quickly done, the emphasis is on their convenience, flexibility and unobtrusiveness. The choice of three modes of study is a frequently mentioned virtue. Says one place: "study @ home".²¹ Says another: "Master of Management Online!", the course being offered "with 24 hrs x 7 days a week support".²² A third, advertising the MBA and MFP (Master of Financial Planning) with a "Study Online!" heading, asks: "Would you like to enhance your employment options but don't have time for on-campus lectures?"²³ A fourth, advertis-

ing its MBA by distance education, begins: "Career control. Study control". This degree is "Designed to enhance your management performance immediately", the university being "Committed to fitting our quality program to your lifestyle and career needs".²⁴ The same university says of its Graduate Certificate in E-Commerce and Master of Commerce in E-Commerce: "Enhance your earning potential/Study E-Commerce online". Further, "Courses can include the development of an Internet business plan for immediate application to your business needs".²⁵

Only the best will do when you are top notch. You will obtain "recognition of a qualification rated the Most Successful MBA in Australia by the Good Universities Guide 2000".²⁶ Note that "We've just been voted Australia's best business school".²⁷ If there are no awards of the sort to crow about, the worth of the place does instead. This university is "World Class: Be Part Of It".²⁸ Another is "Australia's University of the Year".²⁹ A third is "One of the world's most progressive universities".³⁰

Fattened in such places, the higher echelons will be populated by executive innovators, problem-solvers and corporate strategists. "Never have relationship marketing, alliance creation and competitor management been more important. And seldom has being a leader, not a follower been so critical".³¹ Is it "Tough at the Top?". Then "It's easier with an MBA".³²

Also, it will be easier for these maestros of management because they do not have to mess with theory. Feet-on-the-ground practicality is the stigma of professionalism in graduates of business schools. Says one: "A practical management course designed to fit into your busy lifestyle". This one-year part-time Graduate Certificate in Management "with full credit towards a Diploma and MBA" is designed "to give you the management skills you really need at work". It is "A university qualification with a practical approach".³³ Says a second university about its Master of Business & Technology: "Immediate application to your work".³⁴ According to a third, the MBA has a "Total focus on the 'practical'".³⁵ Another MBA is 'Practical', as well as being 'Strategic'.³⁶ Getting it all together, this fourth university explains that its Innovation & Service Management program "is designed to provide practical understanding of the continuous processes of improvement, innovation, change, leadership and learning organisations within the context of Quality Management".³⁷

SOMETIMES, advertisements for the MBA and like courses are the tokens of a game run in imitation of commerce. They are put out by spruikers on the sideshow alley of academe. The trick is to get punters into the tent by playing on their conceits. It's all a bit of a joke. No-one supposes that tadpoles or blokes with hard drives have anything to do with becoming satraps of commerce, or that a desirable feature of university study is the absence of any taint of abstraction.

Then it becomes clear that teaching schools purport a world made entire by their business: the degree is a product and the candidate a consumer. Versions of a self lapped in the pleasures of this world are proffered in advertisements: imagine yourself basking in the prestige conferred by our business school, fast-tracking your career, choosing from the rewards catalogue. Your passport to pleasure, upgraded to first class, is our postgraduate business degree.

Forward and upward motion are the elements of attraction, as in the advertisement of a School of Tourism and Hospitality Management for Bachelor degrees and a 'Masters of International Tourism/Hotel/Convention & Event/& Gaming Management': a lean, tough-looking, short-haired man wearing a dark suit and dark glasses stands with one foot on the second-last and the other on the top step of a ladder (on an angle again), one hand holding an executive briefcase, the other hand shadowing eyes as he gazes evenly into the distance.³⁸ Yet the advertisement, like many another, evidences its own insubstantiality. The ladder and its freight defy gravity as they jut across the unsupporting whiteness of paper. The hand and dark glasses defend vision against a low-horizoned sun: dazzled by the thrusting, ever upwardly moving emphasis, advertisers prepare students to drop like Icarus – dupes of manufactured enthusiasms.

The more you look at these advertisements, the more attention turns to those who contrive them – to their embodiment of purposes in offering university courses in business management. As it were, advertisements tell about regnant ideas in the field; and they caricature accomplished lives, reduce higher education to instrumentality, patent rosy futures, speedily and conveniently assured by way of the business degree.

Business schools control destinies as vacuum cleaners remove dirt. Whether schools exert their announced suction power is to be doubted. One of only two advertisements to appear in the Melbourne tab-

loid, for MBA, DBA, PhD, specialised Masters, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate programs in seventeen areas in a Graduate School of Business, was placed next to one for 'Sex for Life', containing an assurance no business school has been known to match: "Guaranteed Results·No Performance·No Charge".³⁹

ENDNOTES

1. Advertisements quoted here appeared in the two metropolitan dailies, the *Herald Sun* and *The Age*, their Sunday editions, the *Herald Sun on Sunday* and *The Sunday Age*; and in two national papers, the *Australian Financial Review* and *The Australian*.
2. University of Southern Queensland, *Australian Financial Review*, 20–21 January 2001, p.5.
3. Swinburne University of Technology, *Sunday Age*, 14 January, 2001, p.6.
4. Swinburne University of Technology, *Age*, 13 January 2001, p.24.
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Arthur O'Neill is a retired university administrator and teacher – NOT of business administration.

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Homophobes, Hypocrites, Heffernan and Howard

Australia's new authoritarianism

JUSTICE MICHAEL KIRBY was appointed to the High Court of Australia in February 1996. It was one of the last significant appointments of the Keating government. Speaking at his swearing-in ceremony, Kirby presented as a radical in his approach to the law, later recalling: "I said that we could be proud of the law and of our institutions of justice, but that the law in Australia has not always been such a wonderful thing. Not always splendid if you were a woman. Not always so wonderful if you were an Aboriginal Australian or Torres Strait Islander. Not so splendid if you happened to be a homosexual Australian. Australian law has not always been sensitive to everyone's human rights".¹

Re-reading this I was reminded of the late Justice Lionel Murphy's fiery speech at his own swearing-in early in 1975, which began: "Our laws are riddled with injustice. Even when they appear to be just they are often administered unjustly . . . one of the prime reasons for this [injustice] is the excess power of those who possess concentrated economic power".² Like Murphy, Kirby is a servant of rationality, both are committed to justice, to the rule of law, and in so many ways the paths of these two men have crossed again and again.

Kirby's law

KIRBY'S APPROACH to his role as a High Court justice is one which views the common law as adapting to changing social values, allowing it to remain a dynamic reflection of society at different times (he has termed this adaptability "the genius of the common law"). It is an approach which rests on a commitment to "fundamental human rights and human dignity" and in which "lawyers and judges play an honourable part" in the process of legal evo-

lution in the pursuit of justice.³ Justice Kirby's judgements are often imbued with a spirited sense of justice and often, but not invariably, from a humanitarian viewpoint. He has now surpassed the late Justice Murphy as the most frequent dissident in the High Court's history. But unlike Murphy, whose judgements were renowned for their succinct and at times combatively brief style, Kirby's judgements are long, reflective and from the viewpoint of legal persuasiveness, ornately crafted.

In a most recent speech Kirby proudly referred to the High Court's decision in the Mabo case as "providing a catalyst for legislative action which quickly followed".⁴ This description of how legal judgement can precipitate legislative action gives us some insight into the tensions this can create for conservative politicians who may find themselves unwillingly ushered along by judicial decision. There is no doubt that Kirby's explicit legal activism and his preparedness to comment on injustice wherever and whenever he sees it has, over recent years, bothered both the Prime Minister John Howard and the Attorney-General Daryl Williams.

It came to a head over a speech in April last year in which Kirby described what he saw as the grave neglect of public education to which, he reminded his audience, he owed his own start in the law: "I am the only one of the seven Justices of the High Court of Australia who received education from first to last, in public schools. They are the schools open to every member of the public. Schools that make up the core of the Australian system. Schools that are open to young people throughout our country, irrespective of religion, ability or parental means".⁵ Kirby spoke of the drift away from public education in Australia, a drift 'encouraged' by the substantial increase in government funding for private schools:

“For the first time, recurrent expenditures per child in private (‘non-government’) schools is now higher than in public (‘government’) schools; the teacher/student ratio is significantly better because of funding and, most worrying of all, the education retention rate is substantially higher”. Above all, Kirby saw it as his ‘duty’ to speak up, as one who had received his education in public schools: “By all means let us support private and church schools . . . But it should not be at the cost of governmental support for the schools that are the government’s primary responsibility: the public schools of the nation . . . And if people like me, the beneficiaries of the public school system of Australia, do not express their concern, who will?”

John Howard and Daryl Williams made clear their gravest displeasure at Justice Kirby’s comments, expressing the view that it was not appropriate for a High Court judge to enter political debate. These tensions worked in both directions. Kirby for his part responded to Daryl Williams’ criticism of his comments by stating that it was “a matter of regret that the Attorney-General has proved so quick to criticise a member of the judiciary mistakenly, when . . . he has proved so slow to come to the defence of the judiciary, as his predecessors did”.⁶ The relationship between Justice Kirby and both the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General therefore had been troubled for some time, as had the relationship between Justice Kirby and Senator Bill Heffernan but for altogether different reasons.

Justice Kirby had chosen some years earlier to make public his homosexuality, fittingly by listing his partner of thirty years in his entry in *Who’s Who*. At that time of some considerable publicity, Justice Kirby spoke of his need for honesty both personally and as a judge: “It’s not easy for everybody to do what I did because many people live in a world where there is still real prejudice and discrimination against them, when their jobs would be on the line . . . if I had remained silent I would have been conspiring in my own belittlement and I was not willing to do that”.⁷

In 1999 Justice Kirby addressed students at St Ignatius’ College, in Sydney. It was this speech which Senator Bill Heffernan found particularly troubling. In it, Kirby spoke of what he called “the game of shame”, the denial of homosexuality which he was no longer willing to play. “You should reject ‘poofter bashing’ and harassment of people you think might be gay. This is the conduct of cowards. These are the attitudes that led to the burning of heretics, the Holo-

caust, the Pink Triangle of the Nazis”.⁸ Yet in Kirby’s powerful call to tolerance, compassion and equality, Senator Heffernan could see only advocacy for ‘a cause’, citing it in his scandalous attack on Justice Kirby made under the cover of parliamentary privilege in March, as evidence of Kirby’s unsuitability for judicial office.⁹

Heffernan and Howard in cowards’ castle

I WOULD LIKE to spend some time briefly going through the chronology of the parliamentary attack on Justice Kirby, because it is so often confused and difficult to unravel and therefore to see the implications of it, particularly in the context of what were undoubtedly heightened emotions at the time. I want to say from the outset that I do not subscribe for a moment to the view that this was Senator Bill Heffernan acting on some sort of lone crusade as the Prime Minister and many commentators have repeatedly stated.¹⁰ If this was a crusade it was a two-person one, with John Howard firmly in the driver’s seat.

Let’s look at these facts: the allegations were first raised by Heffernan after ‘earlier discussions’ with the Prime Minister about them.¹¹ Howard was fully apprised of Heffernan’s claims. Indeed, Heffernan had sent Howard a copy of a letter to the NSW Police Commissioner setting out precisely these claims. Howard immediately acknowledged that, although he knew of Heffernan’s plans to make these claims against Kirby, he at no stage advised him not to do so and that his only comment to him was that he ought not to abuse parliamentary privilege. Heffernan therefore went ahead with his attack under parliamentary privilege, knowing where his leader stood on this.

Heffernan began by expressing feigned concern for the position of homosexual judicial figures, who thereby find themselves at risk of “suicide, blackmail, police entrapment, hypocrisy and other horrors”, a risk precisely exemplified in Heffernan’s subsequent comments. Heffernan moved on to discuss the speech Kirby had given to the students at Riverside in which he had urged compassion and understanding, describing it as a speech to “the impressionable young men at St Ignatius College . . . in which an impartial observer may have detected ‘the deployment of judicial authority in support of a cause’”.¹² Heffernan described how his concerns that “practising homosexuals” appointed prior to the 1984

change of legislation against same-sex offences in NSW might be open to blackmail, had led him to revisit the transcript of the Wood Royal Commission. There he found the revelations by “the disgraced solicitor KR5, who provided evidence regarding clients at the boy brothel Costellos . . . there were lawyers there, judges”. The issue of who the judges were, Heffernan continued triumphantly, was never answered. From this point on, Heffernan’s speech shifts from homosexuality to “people who see sex with children as a perk of office”, an easy elision between homosexuality and paedophilia, as if the two are one and the same.

The specific allegations which he then made against Justice Kirby we are now familiar with: Heffernan claimed to have “statutory declarations from rent boys”, (in the event he had only one, not several, and that one was from an already completely discredited witness who had likewise provided false evidence in John Marsden’s libel case against the witness program); Heffernan also claimed to have in his possession “Comcar driver records” showing the illegal use of Commonwealth cars “on a regular basis”. Again he had only one such record and that was shown equally quickly to have been falsified. The driver who had supplied it, Heffernan suggested, “deserves whistleblower protection”, a comment which gives us some insight into his understanding of the possible uses of the government’s proposed ‘whistleblower’ legislation.

The Prime Minister meanwhile, declined to condemn Heffernan’s attack, saying only that Heffernan held those views very sincerely and that he had introduced them into the parliament as “a last resort”. Far from ensuring that Heffernan not breach parliamentary privilege as he had earlier claimed, far from protecting the separation of powers, and the already strained relations between the executive and the judiciary, John Howard, Prime Minister, added to his minister’s calumny the following day. During Question Time Howard read into Hansard and tabled Senator Heffernan’s letter to him, which contained scandalous claims of “potential commitment of criminal offences” involving an under-age person. These were claims which even Heffernan had not made before Parliament. This then was the second prong of the attack, for Howard’s parliamentary attack, which introduced new and even more damaging material against Kirby, was made under a double shield of cowardice – not only could Howard hide behind parliamentary privilege but he could also say

that these were Heffernan’s words not his (this is the ‘it wasn’t me’ mantra we have become so familiar with in relation to DSD spying and the children overboard inquiry).

The Prime Minister on the other hand, immediately defended Heffernan’s outburst on the grounds that, since Heffernan was not satisfied with earlier NSW Police investigations into claims against Kirby, he “exercised his right . . . to further ventilate those matters”. The implications of this proposition are dire, for these claims had been traversed several times by police and by a Royal Commission and had been found every time to be unsubstantiated and unsustainable: “None of these witnesses provided any information which was supportive of unlawful activity on the part of the judicial officer”.¹³ Now, ordinarily you might expect that to be the end of it. Yet rather than insisting to Heffernan that there clearly was an absence of any evidentiary basis for prosecution and that therefore the matter should be dropped, the Prime Minister appeared to justify as a ‘right’ their subsequent parliamentary ‘ventilation’, presumably until an outcome is achieved with which Heffernan, rather than the courts, is satisfied. It is a suggestion which places parliamentary trial over the rule of law. It is the sanctioning of this dangerous process by John Howard that not only breaches the separation of powers but also marks an improper use of the parliament as a ‘star chamber’, naming individuals in an apparent parliamentary trial which is above the judicial process.

Senator Heffernan’s misuse of Parliamentary Privilege to impugn the integrity of a High Court justice in this way, constitutes a significant attack on the independence of the judiciary itself. Heffernan’s stated dissatisfaction with Kirby’s judgements, together with his somewhat bizarre suggestion that Kirby’s homosexuality precludes him from acting impartially in some cases is clearly, as Kirby has in-

Heffernan’s misuse of Parliamentary Privilege to impugn the integrity of a High Court justice in this way, constitutes a significant attack on the independence of the judiciary itself.

licated in his response, an attempt to interfere with his duties as a judge.

The undercurrent

IT IS HERE that a broader political issue comes into play in this scandalous attack, for both Heffernan and Howard called for the urgent establishment of a judicial commission to inquire into such claims against judges. This is the point at which their agendas intersect. Heffernan's initial attack on Kirby is as sinister as it is cowardly, for it masks this more profound agenda in which he is running in tandem with John Howard. Let there be no misapprehension about the Prime Minister's parallel interest in this particular judicial fracas. While Heffernan's "obsession with homosexuality" has been widely remarked upon, this reflects only Heffernan's specific interest in Justice Kirby. Howard's interest however, is in the big picture. In this case his interest is in reshaping the mechanism for the dismissal of justices and hence recasting the key constitutional means of ensuring the separation of powers and defining the relationship between the executive and the judiciary. To many it is the independence of the judiciary which is the essence of the rule of law in a democracy. Kirby's particular case is merely the means through which this more profound shift towards some form of executive oversight of the judiciary has been proposed.

Removal of a justice

UNDER OUR CONSTITUTION a justice of the High Court can only be dismissed through both Houses of Parliament voting for removal on the grounds of 'proved misbehaviour'. This is one of the key elements in protecting the separation powers, ensuring that justices cannot be removed by whim of executive government; their tenure is secure. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that this section has never been utilised, John Howard considers that it now needs urgent review, largely because in his view, "there is no preliminary procedure to assess the value or otherwise of allegations". This is an extraordinary statement: first it appears to give support to the use of parliament to make baseless claims against High Court justices, by proposing a formal means of further pursuing them; second, Howard's scheme clearly suggests that police investigations are an inadequate means of dealing with allegations against High Court justices. In this latter sense, the

scheme proposes that there ought to be differential treatment of claims made against judicial figures from those made against other members of the community for whom such matters would be passed on to the relevant authorities and dealt with there.

Specifically, Howard is suggesting vesting unprecedented power in the executive to establish a body to investigate claims against judges rather than let any claims go to the police which would be the usual course of events and which would ensure that the judge received the same level of protection as would any one of us facing such charges. Under the Howard scheme any allegation, regardless of its veracity and no matter how politically motivated, would be trawled through by a quasi-judicial body which would in itself result in irreparable damage to a judicial contender, regardless of the outcome of the process. This is a recipe for executive control which is both unnecessary and dangerous.

The only example we have of such a body being established to inquire into judicial figures is the highly politicised Commission of Inquiry set up in 1986 to yet again investigate claims against Justice Lionel Murphy following his acquittal of charges of attempting to pervert the course of justice. I agree entirely with Brett Walker, President of the NSW Bar Association that this "grossly unsatisfactory experiment [of a commission of inquiry] for the late Justice Lionel Murphy should deter another attempt in that direction".¹⁴

The intersections between Kirby and Murphy are compelling. Kirby is seen by many and has indeed described himself as a radical on the bench, as Murphy also clearly was; both are somewhat iconoclastic. Kirby recalls the visit of the Queen in 1980 to officially open the new High Court building in Canberra; Lionel Murphy called him at that time, concerned about whether or not he should wear the ceremonial wig. (Murphy had refused to wear the horse-hair wig even as a High Court Justice and later on the High Court agreed with him and abandoned wigs, but at that stage they were still worn.) Kirby told him: "Astonish them Lionel – wear your wig". So Lionel wore the wig, as all the justices did, and amidst the extraordinary pomp and ceremony Kirby described the Queen, "in a simple yellow dress, [who] somehow seemed the only person on the platform from the twentieth century".¹⁵

Justice Kirby now joins Lionel Murphy as a radical justice 'named' in a parliament as a precursor to the establishment of an immensely damaging per-

sonal inquiry. Murphy was 'named' by the Queensland Transport Minister and former member of the Queensland Police Special Branch, Don Lane in March 1984 following extensive media reports of illegal police taping of a judge's telephone conversations. Lane appeared unaware of the implications for the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary, for he explicitly linked the attacks on Murphy to his strongly centralist judgements on the High Court which Lane described as 'abhorrent' to Queenslanders. Lane was a former Police Minister in Joh Bjelke-Petersen's long-standing Queensland government who subsequently fell foul of the Fitzgerald Royal Commission and was jailed following his conviction on charges of misappropriation. Nor could Lane see any impropriety in the fact that he had discussed judicial appointments in Queensland with his Police Commissioner Sir Terence Lewis, who was also subsequently jailed. Immediately after his parliamentary naming of Murphy, Lane quickly came to the central issue: Justice Lionel Murphy must stand down.

In both these cases against Murphy and Kirby, claims from within the parliament of the unsuitability of the individual justice to sit, indicate the political nature of the allegations made against them. For a justice of the High Court to succumb therefore to such baseless parliamentary charges would directly compromise the independence of the judiciary, essential for continued confidence in the legal system. There are those who have eagerly asserted in the aftermath of the Heffernan/Howard claims that, in the interests of the Court, a justice once attacked in this way must go. Christopher Pearson immediately penned an article headed 'Kirby must stand down', scarcely waiting for the dust to settle.¹⁶ Yet in my view it is in the absolute interest of the Court that justices attacked in this way, under the cowardly protection of parliamentary privilege, must stay – to do otherwise would be to directly compromise the independence of the judiciary and embolden those who would use the parliament to effect the removal of a justice in this way.

During Lionel Murphy's trial in 1985, Michael Kirby appeared as a character witness for him. Kirby was subjected to a vigorous testing of his personal and professional integrity in a zealous cross-examination by the senior barrister for the prosecution, Ian Callinan QC, now also a justice of the High Court. Kirby has spoken of this time of Murphy's trial: "No Justice ever suffered, as Lionel Murphy did,

such public calumny of opponents and critics . . . Murphy's ordeal was unique. It was prolonged. It was public. It was unrelenting. It afforded an unprecedented spectacle of two public criminal trials of a judge of the highest court. It submitted him to unendurable stress over a decade".¹⁷

Kirby and Murphy had been close colleagues since 1973 when, as Attorney-General in the Whitlam government, Murphy had established the Australian Law Reform Commission. Kirby recounts a chance meeting with Murphy in the lift of the Attorney-General's building in Canberra: "Murphy then endeavoured, between ground floor and seventh floor where I got out, to persuade me to be Chairman of the Law Reform Commission. I'd only just got through the first batch of my modest disclaimers before the lift arrived at seven, but he would take no negatives". Gough Whitlam described the appointment as 'inspired'.

Nevertheless, despite these intersections there are also some significant differences between these two influential jurists. In part these differences go some way towards understanding the very different outcomes of the parliamentary attacks upon them. Kirby has written: "I never quite understood the warm friendship he extended to me. We reflected the different communities of Ireland from where our forebears sprang. [Murphy] was sparkling, embracing, reaching out, always willing to open a bottle of champagne; always happy to rush off to a party or to a late-night talk about philosophy. I was serious, applied, reserved, methodical. Sleep was more precious than champagne. And yet, friends we became . . . he would be glad that I have now overtaken his record for dissenting opinions in the High Court".¹⁸

The silent Daryl Williams

ONE OF THE MOST disappointing aspects of this recent episode, and there have been many, has been the silence of the Attorney-General, Daryl Williams. Traditionally the Attorney-General, as the

Justice Kirby now joins Lionel Murphy as a radical justice 'named' in a parliament as a precursor to the establishment of an immensely damaging personal inquiry.

first law officer, is seen as having a special duty peculiar to that office, to protect the judiciary from attack. Many have asked why Kirby should not be expected to answer these claims himself; indeed I have been asked many times why Murphy did not more vigorously address these same issues. In both these cases anything more than the one-page rebuttal which both Murphy and Kirby provided, would drag them into partisan debate and would in itself contribute to the breach of the separation of powers for which the government has been rightly criticised. A High Court justice is in this sense unusually vulnerable. Judges are expected to stay above and separate from party politics; they cannot get down in the gutter with politicians determined to act for the basest political motives, without sully themselves and their office in the process. "He is almost defenceless".¹⁹

It is this determination to trample on established relations between the different arms of government, to endanger the independence of the judiciary that lies at the heart of the rule of law and which comprises the very essence of healthy democratic practice, that is of such concern. For another grievous example we need look no further than the so-called 'terrorism' legislation currently before parliament – which would allow the Attorney-General to outlaw organisations without trial, and to thereby render continued support for them illegal – as further evidence of this government's relentless drive towards greater executive control despite the dangers this poses to our democratic fabric of justice and the rule of law. One commentator has referred to this as part of John Howard's "reactionary determination to bring under partisan control any and all formerly independent institutions be they the Public Service, the defence forces or the courts".²⁰ In my view, this is how the Kirby episode is best understood, not as an attack on Justice Kirby *per se* but as a shamelessly engineered scandal in an attempt to generate the means of controlling an independent institution.

Justice Kirby has not commented on the recent furore other than through his extraordinarily generous response to Heffernan's apology, which in itself brought the other major players in this tale into stark ethical relief. But in a recent speech Justice Kirby alluded to this episode and its unwitting exposition of the great principles of justice: "I myself have suffered discrimination on the ground of my sexuality. I do not intend to make a big thing of it. Others in other countries have suffered much worse, including death, imprisonment and lifelong stigmatisation.

However, my position, as a member of a minority, has helped me to realise the importance, in a pluralist society, of judges upholding the law for all people. Equal justice under the law means exactly what it says".²¹

ENDNOTES

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3. Justice Michael Kirby, 'The challenges to justice in a plural society', *Commonwealth Lawyers' Association Judicial Conference*, 4 April 2002.
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5. Justice Michael Kirby, 'In praise of public education', *Graduation Ceremony. University of South Australia*, 27 April 2001.
6. Mottram, 'Caught in the line of fire'.
7. John Stapleton, 'Fight against intolerance the theme of Kirby's life', *The Australian*, 13 March 2002.
8. Justice Michael Kirby, 'Social justice, the churches and homosexuality', Speech to St Ignatius' College, Riverview <www.abc.net.au/news/indepth/featureitems/s503680.html>.
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10. Howard described Heffernan's attack as being "off his own bat", Michelle Grattan, 'Judge brands Senator "homophobic"', *SMH*, 14 March 2002; Grattan elsewhere refers to Heffernan's 'zealotry', 'Pride, prejudice and privilege', *SMH*, 16 March 2002; Christopher Pearson similarly describes Heffernan as "a loose cannon", 'Kirby must stand down', *The Age*, 14 March 2002; and Tony Abbott saw Heffernan as "off on a frolic of his own".
11. Michelle Grattan, 'Judge brands Senator "homophobic"'.¹¹
12. Heffernan is citing the Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, Murray Gleeson, on judicial legitimacy.
13. Malcolm Brown, 'Judge was cleared at inquiry on police', *The Age*, 14 March 2002.
14. Brett Walker, 'The evidence points to grave errors of judgement', *Australian Financial Review*, 15 March 2002.
15. Justice Michael Kirby, 'Foreword' in Hocking, *Lionel Murphy*, p.iv.
16. Christopher Pearson, 'Kirby must stand down', *The Age*, 14 March 2002.
17. Justice Michael Kirby, 'Foreword', p.vi.
18. *ibid.*
19. Professor George Williams in Mike Secombe, 'Inside cowards' castle', *SMH*, 16 March 2002.
20. *ibid.* We might add the ABC to that list.
21. Kirby, 'The challenges to justice in a plural society'.

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Angela Mitropoulos

Signs of Life

RECENTLY, “illegal immigration” was listed in a Defence Department White Paper as a “non-military threat to our national life”. Around the same time, the Department of Immigration announced a campaign of “saturation surveillance” extending from the northern coastline to well outside Australian territorial waters, and the systematic use of biometrics in the implementation of ‘border protection’. And so, if you happen to cross a line drawn on maps but not on the seas, and if you do so without the necessary papers, everything you do is watched and recorded in detail, in one way or another. From the very first blip and flash on the radar screens of military patrols signalling the presence of your boat, reports are sent to the highest levels of Government and your every move is photographed and videotaped. Where it is possible for messages to be sent from the vessel you are on – such as the Norwegian freighter the *MV Tampa* – the Defence Signals Directorate monitors those communications.

In the internment camps, there are floodlights – like those in football stadiums – to ensure that night cannot hide anything you do from the cameras and guards. Here you are, again, photographed and videotaped constantly, with cameras situated throughout. You are also subjected to biometric testing: you will be fingerprinted, your voice is recorded to check accent and dialect, swabs and body samples can be taken to examine your DNA. Every protest you make, any resistance to your internment is filmed and studied to single out ‘troublemakers’. If you are registered as a ‘troublemaker’, you are likely to be put into an isolation unit, which also functions as a ‘round-the-clock observation unit’. You may also be denied a visa and deported under the conformist provisions of the ‘character test’: “the applicant will not pass the character test if [they] . . . incite discord in the Australian community [or] . . . become involved in activities that are disruptive.”

In one way or another, all the techniques which can record the movements of your body, all the instruments which can be used to document and inspect the sounds and gestures that someone alive can make, are deployed in a bid to halt that movement and fix an identity sufficient to process you through the classifying machinery of migration policy – asylum seeker, refugee, migrant, unlawful non-citizen, illegal, *persona non* . . . Biometrics and surveillance systems are the modern technological accessories of the (also modern) ‘refugee determination process’, a means in a larger methodology which compels you to prove – over and again and to everyone you speak with – that you have endured a sufficient and very particular kind of suffering, and that you are therefore worthy of release from arbitrary imprisonment.

The criteria of the Refugee Convention – drafted in the post-Second World War and Cold War period – favour Eastern European athletes and blithely encourage nationalist identification; but they rule out most of the reasons for movement and flight today, such as wars, famine, environmental disasters, desertion, the flight from nationalism. Which is to say, they rule out speaking of the proximate connections between migration and the rotting and restoration of global capitalist arrangements, such as the geopolitical strategisings over oilfields in the Middle East and their nomadic and increasingly insurgent workforce or the relationship between the IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs and wars, famine and slaughter. You cannot remain silent; but are bound to speak. Still, do not speak of economics. Speak only of persecution, a limited set of persecutions. You can – in fact, you must, because this is a condition of your release from internment – be reduced to an object which can be watched and pitied, examined by molecular biologists, the military, lawyers, chemists, ministerial advisers, psychologists, migration officials and tribunals and the entire array

Inside the
internment camp,
many were still
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bipartisan as it is dominant. It can be expressed as either support for internment – as Ruddock did when he suggested that “the more you say you are prepared to compromise because of behavioural issues, the more people will misbehave”¹ – or it can be articulated as a way of distancing oneself from, and implicitly chastising, what are seen as immoderate or unmanageable forms of protest. In either case, rebellion is stripped of any political-economic reference, complex meanings and agency. Instead, such revolts – when they are not simply presented as an enigma – are depicted as the acting-out of the traumatised or the dissolute, ultimately warranting chemical restraint and counselling and explained through psychological motifs as inherent to the individual or as extraneous to the system of internment, that is: as originating from some foreign cultural inclination or place.

When tolerance is posed as a question, compassion presented as a demand, or when one is granted the authority to welcome – in short, when one is granted the power to make decisions over the life of another – the object of this decision will always be treated as an object, however benevolently on occa-

of audio-visual and biometric technologies at their disposal. But you cannot be a ‘troublemaker’, a subject capable of action and decision. You must learn patience and passivity, roll yourself into an inert object which others act upon, watch, test and make decisions about.

This is what being recognised, acknowledged and classified as a refugee entails: being enclosed by a narrative which, at best, can prick consciences and, at worst, serves to render those who fail to be granted a visa (or who are rendered ineligible to make an application with the slur of child-chucking) as pushy and manipulative of that *same* conscience when they protest that enclosure. This narrative is not so much

sion. ‘Refugees are welcome’ – only those with (aspirations to) such power speak in such a language. So many debates before the Festival of Freedoms² which hovered around these issues, so many debates after. Does the fence-line (and the border) provide a means to distinguish between, on the one hand, protesters, activists, politics and, on the other hand, refugees, victims, psychology? What does it mean when both some organisations which claim to speak ‘for refugees’³ and the Minister for Immigration mobilise the same constructs: “The protesters have incited inappropriate behaviour.”⁴ Yet, no matter how much such terminology dominated the airwaves, with Woomera2002 being organised through autonomous networks and thereby having ruled out the means by which such debates could be resolved, they were deliberately held in tension and without the assumed finality of collective decree, thus leaving a space open for the arrival of the immediate, unexpected and untrammelled.⁵

Conditions of visibility

JUST AS I AND MANY OTHERS made our way back from Woomera over the Easter break, the Department of Immigration (DIMA) announced a shortlist of architectural firms who would vie for the contract to design new internment camps, one of which would be located in Brisbane. DIMA’s media release indicated a shift in the architectural design, if not fact, of internment. It encouraged the firms toward innovation, providing “an opportunity for architectural organisations participating in the design process to showcase their talents and potentially earn international recognition in an environment where the illegal movement of people around the world is a growing international problem.”⁶

When it comes to innovations in the architectural design of places of confinement, there is none more famous than Jeremy Bentham (1748–1842), reformist lawyer, founder of utilitarianism and designer of the Panopticon. The Panopticon is a constant, all-seeing surveillance mechanism. In Bentham’s particular and original version, this was a tower located in the centre of the prison, with the cells arranged in a radial fashion around it and in such a way that they could be viewed by an ‘inspector’ who, in turn, remained invisible to them. Prisoners would know they were under constant surveillance, yet could never be sure whether they were at any given time, thereby introducing psychological uncertainty (or ‘reason-

able paranoia') as a means of control and voyeurism as the conduit of power.

Since Bentham, the Panopticon – or rather, the forms of control that it inaugurated – have become routine. And, just as the camera has increasingly replaced the central tower, Australia's new internment camps are already implementing electronic solutions to the problem of maintaining and enforcing control.⁷ Electronic fences rather than the unseemly barbed wire and spiked bars that encircle Woomera, Maribyrnong and Villawood will surround the new camp at Baxter near Port Augusta. Electrified fences cannot be pushed over and dismantled as easily; and yet, above all, this particular innovation is directed at the escalating *sense* that Woomera and places like it are concentration camps – not the fact that they are,⁸ but the *visual sense* that they are. In other words, the aim of such innovations in confinement is not only to produce more effective forms of internment, but to render obsolete images which delegitimise the grounds of policy (of faces behind barbed wire) and the circulation of images of intractable resistance (of the scaling and dismantling of those same fences).⁹

When, post-*Tampa*, the Government instructed Defence media liaison staff to only distribute those photographs and videos to the media which did not 'personalise' undocumented migrants, this specifically meant editing out those images which showed people's faces and, in particular, their eyes. When we look into the face of a stranger, we recognise something that is not so strange after all. Unlike Bentham's Panopticon inspector, hidden from the eyes of those whom it interns and seeks to control, we recognise that the stranger can return our gaze, is capable of looking at us and bringing into question our responses and responsibilities in that relationship. What we recognise, in this instance, is not that we can see another before us, but that we can see one another. What this encounter calls out from us and how this affects us – this is the shaky ground upon which communities, politics, love and our sense of self are created and altered. In a philosophical register, this meeting between strangers is the prototype of all ethical questions, dilemmas and risks.

And so, an impromptu rendezvous between strangers and through fences turned into the great escape, and immediately it was a question of hiding rather than showing, stopping camera crews from filming, swapping clothes, blending into the anonymity of the crowds, remaining silent and in the darkness as

police ringed the perimeter, established a roadblock to do identity checks on those travelling in cars down the single road, and rumours were sent flying for the entire night that the police would raid the campsite. Inside the internment camp, many were still fighting, eventually subdued by batons, tear gas and chemical restraints. It took well into the next morning before the authorities could establish how many and the identities of those who had escaped. There were, of course, those few who saw it as a chance for more visibility, photo ops with escapees who had little say in the matter, loud chanting that worked like a magnet for the police, and the distribution of information as the currency of political authority – not because it was effective, or rather because it was effective in achieving something else that was deemed more important. Nevertheless, that this happened as little as it did, that for the most part freedom was regarded as more important than spectacle, and that the circulation of images of resistance were considered to be more powerful than any fiction of command, indicates the lines of flight which connected for a moment at Woomera2002.¹⁰

Kneel down and you will . . .

FOR SOME TIME – so long perhaps that few sense that such things are contingent – many leftists have seen themselves as charged with the task of bringing things to light, of undoing ignorance with knowledge and of speaking of that which remains unspoken. Yet, we can easily discern from recent events that knowledge of the facts has not meant an erosion in support for the policy of internment, or indeed a challenge to the belief that "they are throwing their children at us"¹¹ or capable of doing so. There has never been a dearth of visibility, knowledge or speech on this issue. On the contrary, the experience of internment is that of identification rather than anonymity, constant surveillance, the obligation to speak and reveal all, bright lights that blot out the darkness, and (not least) instruments which enhance the vision of power, right down into the very molecules of life itself. Rarely has a week passed in the past three years where the struggles in the internment camps have not been apparent on the nightly news, even if in those images they were rarely depicted *as struggles*. But, still, the theory of inadequate vision, knowledge and speech persists, as both explanation and solution. Either the solution posed to every problem is that of more visibility and speech,

better more accurate knowledge; or it is deployed as an explanation for the continuing existence of the camps: surely, if people could only see, if they could only know that terrible things were occurring, then things would be different.

In that sense, this approach has not been about what might work to shift support for the internment camps or to compose an opposition to their existence. If that were the case, it would have become apparent quite soon that, in the same period of time, the more often such arguments were expressed the greater the political rewards of being tough on boat arrivals. To put it another way, the more many critics of government policy, unreflectively or deliberately, positioned themselves as the philosophical heirs of Bentham, the more they worked to strengthen support for government policy. Having proffered a particular theory of the relationship between knowledge and action, where knowledge is cast as decisive and eminent, of the need for more vision and more light, those critics spoke less the language of a desire for things to be otherwise than they betrayed a belief in the virtues of social management, albeit a more progressive kind. Difficult as it is to recall that Bentham was, in his time, far from being a conservative, it is important to note that the Panopticon was Bentham's solution, as a progressive, to the growing problem of prisoner revolts, sincerely offered as a more humane way to control prisoners than by brute force.

But what was never at issue for Bentham, just as it is not put into question by many critics of government policy, is the division between knowledge and action, between the one who watches and the one who is watched, and the very act assigning oneself in the role of bringing salvation and light to the unfortunate peasants of the Carpathian mountains. While there are those who relish the role of inspector and supervisor, most people's daily experience is of being inspected, supervised and managed, sometimes as intrusively as those in the camps are. For if Bentham represents the genesis of surveillance as a means of controlling prisoners, Frederick Taylor (1856–1915) represents the introduction of detailed surveillance as an instrument of management in the workplace.¹² Taylor was the founder of scientific management, the study of the movements of workers' bodies in relation to the time it took for each, detailed action, with the aim of making such movements (production) more efficient. The development

of a field of knowledge about such movements was crucial to the growth of supervision and management in the twentieth century, in particular the management of assembly-line production. Through the twentieth century, the use of surveillance as a technique of control expanded out from the prison to the workplace and, more recently, to the streets. Even leaving aside that those who locate themselves on the side of knowledge and call for more visibility echo a widespread means of social control (of workers, of undocumented migrants, of young people on the streets), there is no evidence that knowledge of something terrible might lead to social change. For instance, no-one has really asked the question, troubling as it is, whether the increasing use of images of suffering people in the camps might be – for some or for many – more enjoyable than scandalous, more confirming of racism than of change.¹³

In addition to asking questions about the kinds of images being circulated and what work they do, the question of the relationship between belief and action remains. The pervasive use of surveillance indicates that what people think is less threatening to social order than what people do. Actions – especially daily routine actions – are what shapes beliefs and reality. For instance, it does not matter whether someone believes in capitalism or thinks it ought to be abolished, they can still reproduce it in their actions, in the trivial customs of waged work, shopping, and so forth. Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), concerned with the erosion of religious orthodoxy by modern liturgical practices and the like, argued that “we must kneel, pray with the lips, etc.” in order to believe. For Pascal, the ritualisation of the act was the basis for belief and preceded it as its condition: “Proofs only convince the mind. Custom is the source of our strongest and most believed proofs.”¹⁴ That is: it is through habit that belief materialises.

For us today, there are numerous customs, and few more routine than the election of the Federal Parliament. In the sense described above, xenophobia and populism were not *used* in the last Federal Election for political advantage. Rather, the act of a national election always sets nationalism in motion, materialises it, irrespective of any given version. It is not easy to recall an election when xenophobia was quite so explicit as that of the last election. Nevertheless, it is also true that a Federal Election in which no-one claimed that they best represented ‘the national interest’ is unthinkable. When the original Fed-

eral Government sat in 1901, one of the first pieces of legislation it passed was the 'White Australia Policy'. When Bentham applied his utilitarian precepts to the issue of Poor Law Reform, working out what was good or bad in terms of what would increase the general happiness of the greatest number of people, he simply elevated the calculus of the election into a philosophical principle. Bentham's definition of 'the people' extended only to voters, which in Bentham's time only included landowners. In other words, the only people whose happiness is of concern are voters, in today's terms: citizens.

Among those gathered for Woomera2002, everyone engaged in acts of disobedience. When Australian Protective Services made their first serious attempt to move people from the campsite, the first chant that went up was 'No jurisdiction'; the second, after they had failed to make any arrests: 'You've lost control'. Everyone trespassed by simply camping where they did, hundreds helped others to escape and countless have harboured escapees. In the Adelaide Magistrates' Court, as the judge 'released' escapees on bail to be sent back to internment, and with a handwritten note stuck onto the back wall which read "justice = freedom", he twisted around on the bench so that he could not see the note and as few of those who had packed into the courtroom as possible. After some time, he began informing those before him that he had no control over the Department of Immigration: he was releasing them on bail, DIMA were sending them back to the camps. (Recall that internment is extrajudicial.) In South Africa, just before the apartheid laws fell, judges would dismiss the charges against those that had committed acts of disobedience or would fine them the equivalent of a dollar. For bad laws to continue to exist, it matters, above all, that everyone accepts the tautological command to obey the law because it is the law. It does not really matter if anyone disagrees with the internment of undocumented migrants; for as long as most continue to act as if they should, they will be.

ENDNOTES

1. Cited in *The Age*, 8 January 2002.
2. Woomera2002 – autonomadic caravan & festival of freedoms: <http://woomera2002.com>
3. Just before Woomera2002, South Australian Justice for Refugees (a coalition of Church groups and lawyers)

released a statement saying that it did not support the protests. Unofficially, the reasons given to journalists for this were that this action might 'incite' detainees to protest. Just two days prior to this release, detainees had protested inside Woomera after failing to be given assurances that they would not be separated from their children. SAJR is among those groups campaigning for the removal of children and it does not campaign for the closure of the camps.

4. Department of Immigration media release, 30 March 2002.
5. The attempts by the Woomera Area Administrator to move the campsite to a disused football oval, five kilometres away and surrounded by a high fence, were frustrated by the absence of anyone capable of negotiating on everyone's behalf. Police instructions to move on under the threat of arrest were delayed by the police having to return with fifty photocopies of the statement and read it to every single person there.
6. DIMA media release, 3 April 2002.
7. Similarly, proposals have been floated to use electronic bracelets as a substitute for internment, or rather to accomplish internment and control with methods which are cheaper and which decompose resistance to border policing through the atomisation of undocumented migrants and the dislocation of protests. This follows the trajectory of 'labour market reforms': casualisation, the decomposition of the large-scale assembly line and 'mass factory' production methods.
8. Concentration camps are not defined by their architecture or fencing, but by their legal form. That is, concentration camps are spaces in which those who are interned have no rights vis-à-vis the state that interns them and such internment is outside the usual terms of confinement: the laying of charges, trial, the presumption of innocence, etc. In Australia, the Government interns 'suspected unlawful non-citizens'. In Germany in the 1930s, the Government stripped German Jews of their citizenship as a prelude to their internment.
9. See <http://melbourne.indymedia.org/>
10. Or rather, connected again, having initially come together through autonomous networks of s11 (the protests against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne in 2000).
11. This phrase comes not from recent accusations made prior to the Federal Election, but from a science fiction novel, *Dune*.
12. F.W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, New York, Harper Bros., 1911.
13. Although, the use of digitally lip-sewn models by *Australian Style* suggests a lurking fascination more pornographic than rebellious.
14. B. Pascal, *Pensees*, nos. 250 and 252 – first published: 1670. Available at <http://www.orst.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/pascal/pensees-contents.html>

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Last Leg

Dominique Hecq

W•LAY STILL. She watched the new day seep into her room, drifting. She watched the new day all the way down the wall and across the floor. She was sure she wouldn't live through it.

THE WOMAN who came to be known as W. lived in a block of bedsits, a tenement in one of the inner suburbs of Melbourne. W. was of a die-able age. She could have been thirty or forty something. She could have been slightly younger. Or older. Her body was wiry. Taut. She looked spartan. Spare. Perhaps this is why people avoided her.

W. was from Wales. She had lived most of her life in rented rooms in Llangynidr, then Cardiff, but mainly London, where she had earned a living as a nanny from the age of sixteen. She was known as Wallis, then.

W. saw a tenement in the city of Yarra as an anomaly – a luxury, almost. She had her own space and she could keep it for as long as she pleased. Besides, no-one knew anything about her. It suited her. After all, she had nurtured her solitude with more devotion than her body. That had not been easy, and she was proud of it.

W. devoured information. The internet had been a boon, but she liked the television best. Sometimes, W. could be heard through the poorly insulated walls, screaming abuse at the box. She would rage at everything: the news, advertisements, sitcoms, cartoons, soap operas, football games and pseudo documentaries. Somehow, the television aroused her loathing for humanity.

It wasn't that W. hated people. She was, after all, herself, human. Or she usually saw herself so. But an incurable addiction to the fast pace of life and the

amputation of a limb meant that she often had her doubts. She had succumbed to a desire she little understood. Now, she shunned people. She *knew* people and so had chosen to banish herself from their company.

W. found the tenement convenient for reasons she would have liked to see as secret. There was, of course, no shortage of speed. An elderly Khazakstani couple two doors down from her flat imported the stuff through their son's catering business. W. loathed the foreign accent and the old woman's intent way of staring at her. But she didn't really care. They were always in business and always at home.

Wallis' habit had long since claimed her right leg, just above the knee. When she was allotted a disability pension and subsidised housing, she had decided that it wasn't so bad. This is why she had never thought of renouncing her British nationality, which was odd, as it made her a stranger both at home and abroad. Besides, she had a quality chair and a surprisingly efficient prosthetic leg. So, between her British pension, a meagre supplement from some long-forgotten Welsh fund, and the mixed blessing of Australian methadone, W. was able to maintain her health, or *habit*, but she preferred to think of it as her *health*.

Camouflaged in unassuming clothes from a local department store, W. would melt into the urban crowd. Still, she would shudder at the memory of those few periods of withdrawal, both voluntary and otherwise. Taken unawares, she would shudder in public spaces – the Bourke Street Mall, a tram stop on Spring Street, the Treasury Gardens. And she would cringe at the averted gaze of onlookers. Despite appearances, though, W. was an inveterate junkie. She had lost her leg because it had become

gangrenous. The doctor had said it was because of the drugs. He had looked disgusted, not concerned. He must have been right. W. had been using lots of different stuff then, mixing it up and jamming it in. Jamming it in anywhere she thought would give her the best hit. Anywhere she could find a vein and trap it long enough to stab it. Wounds on her leg became infected. She didn't care. In fact, she hardly noticed. The leg started to die. They had to chop it off before its death caused her own.

After the surgery, W. had promised herself never to use the needle again. The golden handcuffs were no longer an option. She started snorting junk, smoked it and mixed it with various liquids so that she could drink it. It wasn't the same. It would never be the same and she knew it. It was all she'd ever truly loved and all she'd ever be good at. It was her fantasy and her nightmare. It was difficult to think of anything that wasn't somehow related to junk. Like showing inkblots to a lepidopterist and asking him to imagine what it would look like.

She was careful when she started again. Always using fresh works. Keeping her wounds clean. She had done so with success for a few years, one slipping unnoticed into the other. Like the tide, her habit fluctuated. Like the moon and its many faces, it took on different urges, suppressing darker desires.

Her body, however, became tired. Her forearms scaly, her bones a grim topography. The fingers of her right hand could no longer form a fist. It became impossible to pierce the skin, let alone raise a vein.

W. was never good with her hands. But still, the impending loss of her right hand devastated her. The television lost its appeal. She pawned her computer. She visited libraries and got interested in early texts about addiction. She got stuck in the Renaissance. It

was a sign, she hoped. She lived in the State Library, read books, made photocopies, and took notes about the escalating pace of life across centuries. She surfed the net. She even sent honey talk via e-mail. It had the advantage of remaining anonymous:

*Gather me balme and cooling violets,
And of our holy herb nicotian
And bring withall pure honey from the hive
To heale the wound of my unhappy hand.*

What else would you do? It was all she knew. She tried, sometimes, to force her mind into the cracks and crevices of memory, to recall something that didn't sting like drugs or stink like death. She tried thinking of friends. Memory played tricks. It was as if she had memories of having had memories – a mismatch of names and faces.

Then, W. went for the big one. Crack. She felt light, but it got messy. Here were the living, here the dead. It was unclear where to draw the line. All the same, W. had made her choice. She'd rather die with handcuffs made of light than live with golden ones.

W. LAY STILL. Days after new days seeped out of the room until the stink hammered down the door into her world of light.

W. was taken to the morgue. There was an autopsy. Half her body had been dead for a lot longer than the rest. She was refrigerated in a big stainless steel drawer marked with the letters UU. Wallis randomly split into some meaningless ideogram. It was the sixth drawer in a wall of seven. Nobody had much to say. In fact, no-one could be found to identify the corpse. W. was cremated at the expense of the Australian taxpayer.

Magazine Wrack

Ken Gelder

FOLLOWING HELEN DANIEL'S sad and untimely death, Peter Rose stepped in as the new editor of *Australian Book Review* (ABR). The first issue under Rose appeared in February/March 2001; well over a year later it is worth looking back at it to see what kind of shape this national journal is in, and what directions it has taken. There is much to criticise, I'm afraid, although there are some good things, too.

A national journal perhaps necessarily stakes a proprietor's claim on the local product. ABR performs this task both casually and eagerly as it talks of "our literary culture", "our national literature", and so on. A well-known Australian classical pianist, Eileen Joyce, is "our Eileen". ABR also likes the 'best' of everything Australian – so someone like Peter Craven, who annually canonises Australian material (the best essays, the best stories, etc.), is much loved. (He's also an ABR board member.)

The role of the editor is thus greatly enhanced. The only review Rose himself has written for ABR is of a book on the literary editor Beatrice Davis, an aristocratic nurturer of Australian writing: "intense, creative, disinterested". We can

be sure that Rose values these features highly and no doubt hopes to replicate them through his journal as it, too, nurtures the best Australian writing. But they sit uneasily with the proprietorial role ABR credits itself with – which (far from being 'disinterested') filters and directs, overpraises friends and colleagues and, in true *gangland* style, doles out reviews to a select few (many of whom are also either board members or editorial advisers).

This means that ABR has become increasingly exclusive in its range of interests. Rose's first issue opened with a review of Geoffrey Blainey's *A Short History of the World*: after this, the vision narrows. The April 2001 issue shows us where the journal is heading, with a photograph of Patricia, the Countess of Harewood, on the cover and her diary notes inside. These tell us about her beautiful English country house and how she comes to Adelaide to eat oysters – a vacuous column that barely fills the page.

Much of this aristocratic demeanour carries through subsequent issues of the journal, and ties its nationalism to a re-emergent Anglocentricity that for better or worse has taken ABR resolutely into the twenty-first century. The journal recently advertised itself in the *London Review of Books*, highlighting expatriate

Australian contributors such as Clive James, John Kinsella and Peter Porter, all of whom feature heavily in Rose's ABR. Porter contributed a major essay to ABR in September 2001 – part of the La Trobe University sponsored series – on Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath: interesting enough, but it has nothing to do with "our literature". It would, indeed, not be out of place in the *London Review of Books*.

Another La Trobe essay by Peter Craven is on 'Shakespeare in Australia' and is perhaps more typical of the new direction of ABR. The essay in fact deals mostly with the Irish, the English literary critic F.R. Leavis, a few British Shakespeare critics from two or three generations ago, and a couple of Australian academics who teach (or taught) Shakespeare here much in the old fashion. It presents various titbits about British stage productions and British actors, and only at the end does it pause to wonder, "where is Australia in all this"? Where, indeed. The essay's cultural cringe and its yearning for British (and Irish) high culture – along with that annoying old-boy manner of Craven's – might make it seem idiosyncratic in a journal that claims to represent national writing. But another essay in the same issue by Andrew Riemer, on Wagnerian

opera, goes down the same path: a pompous little piece which touches Australia only at the end when it sees a bit of Paris unfolding in Adelaide (why else would you go there?) during a production of *The Ring*.

Various other Anglo- or Euro-centric features are reinstalled in *ABR*: the regular Frank Muirish 'Mind Your Language' column put together by Michael Jacobs, for example, which seems unnecessarily pedantic to me (and without Muir's good humour). Nicola Walker, an assistant editor with the *Times Literary Supplement*, is also hired as a regular commentator on 'Media'. Her columns are quintessentially English upper middle class: full of sloane ranger news about literary cocktail parties in London ("martinis, a jazz trio and New York-style canapés") and publicity for various *TLS* ventures. She soon provides undisguised rallying cries for her own journal – "Long live the *TLS!*" – and it may well be that *ABR* shares the sentiment, no doubt modelling itself on this English (but not nationalist) counterpart. The Media column, incidentally, is wasted. Jill Kitson also contributes, writing well but mostly focusing on the ABC – or, unsurprisingly by now, reporting on another trip through literary England. Media issues in Australia pass *ABR* by completely, which is a shame.

THE COLUMNS BY Nicola Walker remind me of Terry Eagleton's recent comment about the tenor of the *Times Literary Supplement* which is probably also applicable to

Rose's *ABR*: highbrow, and yet philistine. Its sponsors, for example, now include Opera Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria. A former director of the NGV contributes a short piece in November 2001 which tells of his tour of Mantua with Friends of the Yale Centre for British Art ("a cultivated lot"). He begins under the shadow of September 11, and then finds himself comforted by the artworks in which he immerses himself. The literary critics who write regularly for *ABR* – Craven, Don Anderson, Andrew Riemer, well known to *gangland* readers – underwrite their own love of high culture with a stubborn belief in the difference between what's good and what isn't. Craven's essay on Shakespeare, for example, ends with this bizarre polemic: "So Shakespeare survives, flickeringly, even when theatre is bad, here in Australia, even when criticism has lost its moorings – in so much of the world". An ungrounded despair about national theatre is mixed here with a familiar loss of faith in critical correctness: for which academics are to blame in the quasi-academic world *ABR* inhabits and draws upon.

A great writer survives all this, it seems – but in Australia, who (besides Shakespeare) is a great writer? David McCooey supplies one answer when, in a review in the April 2001 issue, he compares (without irony) the poet Alan Wearne to God. Poetry has a special place in Rose's *ABR*, not least because Rose is himself a poet, and they form a fairly impenetrable boy's-own world (James,

Kinsella, Porter, Peter Goldsworthy, etc.). But this is also where the question of greatness – who is the best – most anxiously and insistently works itself out.

In the August 2001 editorial, Rose picked up a comment in an earlier essay by Raymond Gaita on Australian views about reconciliation and Aboriginal people. Gaita had spoken – out of the blue, since it bore no relation to his topic – of an English Professor somewhere in Melbourne who, having told his students there are no great books, "was determined to expose the folly of the notion that there are good ones". Australian poets love these kind of apocryphal comments from literary academics: all grist to the mill of cultural capital, I suppose. (I wondered how Gaita had heard of the comment: from one of the Professor's students?) The comment leads Rose to distinguish four types of literature – good, "seriously good", bad and bland – as he introduces an essay by Paul Kane in the same issue on Australian poetry. But Kane's essay does something quite different. Rather than distinguish between good and bad literature, it mixes them up ("The good needs the bad . . ."). Criticism has indeed lost its moorings. Kane soon drops the subject anyway: the rest of his essay is about how self-referential and inward-looking Australian poetry has become and seems, in fact, to offer a dispiriting picture of the genre with which *ABR* is most in sympathy.

It may have been a mistake

for Rose to say, in his first *ABR* editorial, "I believe that *ABR* belongs to the literary community". The problem is that the literary community in Australia is, much like Australian poetry for Paul Kane, self-referential and inward-looking. Poets review their colleagues and friends; an editorial adviser, Don Anderson, is allowed to praise a literary journal edited by his protégé and produced out of his own English department. A little more literary promiscuity is needed, I think. The diary columns in various issues help: most of them narrate experiences at literary festivals (*ABR* adores literary festivals), but at least they travel globally (to Ghana, Auckland, Durban, Italy) and so break the cycle of Anglocentric yearnings (although Peter Goldsworthy does wax lyrical about the Poetry Festival at King's Lynn).

These are all benign, well-intentioned but sometimes rather pointless little columns. The mood of *ABR* changes when it either moves outside of literature, or puts literature to political purpose. A good journal encourages dissent, in my view: always a problem when friends review friends. When a journal lets its books leave the fold, however, dissent can return like a lamb to the slaughter. The letters pages of a journal become the key indicator of a journal's health: its ability to sustain debate, to attract passion and argument from its readers, and to allow for radically different points of view. In the first half of 2001, the letters pages in *ABR* were almost dead. But an essay by

the Canberra historian James Griffin in the June issue – on Manning Clark and John Wren – singlehandedly kicked it back into the land of the living.

Along the way, Griffin had swiped at the Melbourne historian Stuart Macintyre (an "embourgeoised" critic, etc.). In the July issue, Macintyre replied in a long letter which saw Griffin as – among many other things – an "avuncular bore", a "windbag", and a "ceaseless invigilator of inaccuracy". Ken Buckley, also a target of Griffin's, replied in the August issue. And Griffin replied in turn to both of them in prose of Shandyesque proportions ("Preening himself in conspicuous humanitarian weeds . . ."). Wonderfully spiteful stuff. Other letters soon added further life to the journal: a fine reply by Bruce Pascoe to a sanctimonious, sensationalising piece by Mary Ellen Jordan on remote Aboriginal communities; and an argument between Patrick Wolfe and Roger Sandall over the latter's very unpleasant little book on the 'culture cult'.

IT'S PROBABLY TRUE that much Australian poetry and fiction published these days doesn't really lend itself to political debate. Hilary McPhee makes this point in her review of a collection (guess who the editor is) of the 'best' Australian short stories: that most Australian literature now is apolitical. So debate and dissent is difficult to nurture here, except through the superannuated language of literary greatness (or badness). *ABR* under Rose has published some fascinating literary essays – on H.G. Wells's visit to

Australia in 1938–39, or on the 'culture of death' in Australia. But it only manages to engage directly with the current realities of Australian life when it moves to other disciplines and topics: media studies, history, sociology, 'society' and cultural studies.

Peter Beilharz emerges as a fine reviewer in this context; and Guy Rundle, John Button and Allan Patience cover most of the political writing effectively, although I would hope for new reviewers soon. But I wonder if a national journal ought to develop its ambitions further here? A short reflection on the *Tampa* affair by Julian Burnside offers a rare example of *ABR* responding to current predicaments. There is nothing much else. The editorials stick to their conventional, limited rubric: highlighting feature essays, thanking sponsors, mentioning the odd appearance at the literary festivals. Interestingly, the October 2001 editorial – following the September-11 plane crashes – withdraws from political commentary altogether: "there are times when the act of editorialising seems reckless". There is a loss of political will in these remarks, it seems to me, and it reflects *ABR*'s decision to turn steadfastly to literature for the kind of comforts and stabilities many of its own reviewers may not even believe in any more.

I found myself thinking again about the *London Review of Books*, which had played host to that *ABR* advertisement. This journal published a string of commentaries and letters about September 11 and its aftermath

from writers and literary critics, some of whom were indeed 'reckless' in their analyses of the situation. *LRB* thus remains both literary and political: it intervenes in national and global realities. It can seem as if the new *ABR* – with its aristocratic demeanour, its Anglocentricity, its inward-looking literariness – is heading somewhere else altogether.

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A Woomera Easter

Anne Habgood

IT WAS AFTER SUNSET on Friday night when we pulled in to the Pimba roadhouse, just 5km from Woomera. On the radio an electrifying report announced that protesters had in the last hour helped break refugees out of the Centre and many were still free. Police were expected to raid the camp at any moment. Tense and expectant, we made our way towards the lights of Woomera. This was not the Australia I knew, approaching those tens or hundreds of dazzling military orange and blue lights stretching out across the darkened horizon.

The Easter protests at Woomera had been planned for a long time. About two thousand people from all over Australia made the long dusty trip to the red heart to protest against the government's mandatory detention and

mistreatment of refugees. People came with groups, friends, house-mates, children, parents. Some planned civil disobedience, others a back seat. A campsite between the Woomera township and the Detention Centre, with food, water, medical, legal, sound system and media facilities run by volunteers, was set up on the Wednesday and stayed put, despite initial police attempts to tear it down.

We were forced to leave our minibus at a police roadblock and travel the rest of the way on foot. The camp was in chaos when we arrived. A blockade protected one escaped woman and child in a tent, people were running around, or calling others, or standing talking. Feverishly, I set up my tent and prepared for trouble. Nearby, the spokescouncil passionately debated how best to aid the refugees within the camp. The police were expected to raid at any moment.

No-one, or almost no-one, had even contemplated the possibility that refugees would actually escape. Hence, there was no plan to cope with this, and very few got away before the police moved in. The fence torn down by protesters was an outer fence which did not encircle the Centre itself. The actual (and only) fence between the refugees and the outside world was breached by the refugees themselves. This fence, a nasty piece of work consisting of two five-metre fences made of thick iron bars topped and separated by razor wire, was overcome by the refugees with the aid of blankets over the razor wire and a loose bar

jemmied open. Friends who were there described how people came over and through the fence covered in blood yet jubilant, shouting 'freedom!', some hugging everyone they could find. The few police who had turned up by this time violently attacked escapees and protesters, and dragged people off by their necks. Activists quickly exchanged clothes with refugees and walked as quickly as they could back to the campsite. Some got away in the first hour, but most escapees remained, and those who left before dawn were recaptured.

Most campers did not know where the escaped refugees were hiding. We were fully aware that undercover police were operating (in fact, one of my friends discovered a 'socialist' who went by the name of Barry doing a report-back). Almost certainly plants were responsible for the misinformation and false alarms. Hence those of us who knew where refugees were, kept it quiet.

A few hours before dawn, one refugee appeared out of the darkness, knocking on our tents. Some friends and I sat with him and heard his story. He was in an advanced state of trauma, rocking back and forth with his head in his hands. He was desperate to tell us his experiences and talked extensively, saying the same thing over and over again, in a low jumpy voice: "I kill myself, I drink shampoo, I drink broken glass . . .", showing us the scars on his arms and chest. He said that he'd rather be dead than back in the Centre. Despite our warnings, he wanted to get as



far away from there as he could before dawn. We counselled him to wait, fearful of roadblocks on the one access road. He eventually found someone prepared to attempt to take a group of refugees out.

Among other serious allegations, he talked of being sleep-deprived by ACM guards who woke him up at arbitrary times demanding he recite his detention number. Guards (and the manager, Peter Macintosh) would abuse him, yelling "Fuck Iraq! Fuck Afghanistan! Fuck Islam! Everyone in Australia hates you and doesn't want you!" The Centre's psychologist told him he was insane ("do I seem crazy to you?" he asked for reassurance). The detainees work for \$1 an hour, seven days a week, in the garden, cooking in the kitchen, cleaning the guards' offices and clothes as

well as their own. They buy their clothes (St Vincent's donated) for \$40 to \$60 dollars. His visa was rejected recently, despite his being recognised as Afghan, despite his family having been killed. He kept repeating, of the views that Ruddock and the media held of refugees as terrorists, or 'economic migrants': "I just want a peaceful life". After hugging us warmly, he left before dawn, and was caught almost straight away.

Friday night's momentous events and resulting stress loomed over the rest of the weekend, which

was a combination of marches, charged meetings, music and slow unwinding. The outer gate was pulled down on Saturday, and a few people were arrested. Impromptu dances, drumming and singing occurred by the collapsed gate. On Saturday afternoon, people napped or talked in the shade, dub music providing a sleepy beat. The desert surrounded us, red earth and rocks, saltbush, the sounds of galahs, open sky and gently rolling hills, wild and beautiful despite the ugly military installations in every direction.

Rebecca Bear-Wingfield, an elder of the Kokatha, arrived that evening and held a meeting with representatives from each affinity group. The protest had been planned to be as much about supporting Indigenous sovereignty over the land blighted by white uranium

mines and prisons, as it was about freeing the refugees. Her criticism that the elders' wishes for non-confrontational action had not been properly engaged with or respected, forced a rethink among protesters, and some dissent.

A better sleep Saturday night meant that the Sunday morning spokescouncil was more relaxed than on previous days, and two marches were organised. The first saw people bringing \$3000 worth of new toys to the gates for the children inside the Centre. (Later, we found out that the soft toys – "a health risk" and dolls – "hard edges" were never delivered to the camp.) The second march, after consultation with Rebecca Bear-Wingfield, was a non-confrontational walk around the Centre to show support for the people locked inside.

As of Friday, there were no police in sight as the Centre was approached. When they did show up, at the razor wire fences, it was suddenly and violently. Some activists speaking through the fence or taking photos (illegal at Woomera), were handcuffed and dragged away. A mounted police charge crushed my girlfriend's feet. We linked arms and conducted chants and shouted conversations with the twenty or so refugees, men, women and children behind the fence, whilst police roamed the crowd, videoing faces and harassing non-white protesters. An Arabic-speaking activist with a megaphone caused palpable unease amongst the police. The refugees held up a banner – 'Refugees are Victims of Politics; Australian People We Request

Your Help'. A man on the roof held up his tiny son. They threw us a bunch of native flowers, saying "Thankyou! Thankyou!". "You're welcome", we shouted back. "Don't give up hope! We'll be back!"

Our walk around the perimeter was hindered by the police, some geared up in green padding, the BMX branding visible, but as most were without truncheons, we were successful. The Centre was still in partial lockdown, we saw nobody until we reached the other side. Here there were mostly women and children. Their desperation was terrible. One woman holding a baby screamed in choking pain and despair, in words I could not understand. Small children cried, shaking the cyclone wire, shouting "Freedom! Freedom!". Teenage girls stood silently watching us. One woman kept crying out: "We are not animals! Why do you lock us in a zoo?" We felt so hopeless and angry and compassionate. The police stood in rows in front of us, their backs to the refugees, but there were a couple with tears running down their otherwise impassive faces.

Being back in the city two days later was difficult for everyone I spoke to who went. It felt almost obscene to return to familiar places full of people who went about their daily business, while the government locked people up in cages in the desert. Many people were disbelieving or hostile when they heard our stories. The ease with which people were able to dismiss them as fabrication or exaggeration was astounding. However, there have been many

supportive listeners. Ex-refugees have thanked us for going. There are many networks being formed and future actions planned. We can only hope for a critical mass to sway public opinion away from this policy, and just keep on fighting.

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Looking Backward, Looking Forward

Barbara Milech

IN JANUARY Olive Pell died at the age of 98. She was the first WA-born poet, and one of the last, if not the last, of the Jindyworobak poets. Then, in May, Dame Rachel Cleland died at 96. Her husband, Sir Donald Cleland, had been Administrator of Papua New Guinea, which inspired two of her books. She and her husband were foundation members of the Liberal Party in WA, although in recent years Dame Rachel loudly criticised the Party for its stance on environmental issues. Leader of the current Opposition, Colin Barnett, said, "Dame Rachel was the conscience of the Liberal Party and was never afraid to make her views known."

Similarly notable West Australian writers were honoured this year. At a February meeting of the Fellowship of Australian Writers 87-year-old Alec Choate, winner of many poetry awards, was made an Honorary Life Member – his autobiography in verse, *My Days Were Fauve* has just

been published. At that same meeting nonagenarian Jean Lang was also honoured. A long-time archivist for the Fellowship, she is an avid scholar of Joseph Furphy, having written *At the Toss of a Coin: Joseph Furphy, the Western Link*. And the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL) resolved to confer Life Membership on Elizabeth Jolley at its July Annual General Meeting in Cairns.

Then, Lee Knowles and her husband Richard Johnson departed WA to live some of the year in NSW and some on Great Barrier Island off the coast of Auckland. A quiet woman with a powerful voice, her book of poetry, *Dial Marina* (FACP), won the WA Premier's Award in 1987. They will be much missed.

At the same time, Western Australia's several writers' organisations and writers-in-residence programs continue to foster new writing in a variety of ways. Wendy Birman was re-elected President of the International Perth PEN Centre. Glyn Parry judged the 2001 Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre short fiction award, First Prize in the Open Section going to Darrell Pitt of NSW for 'Calculations'. Mark Reid judged the FAW [WA] Tom Collins' Poetry Prize, choosing Patricia Sykes of Victoria as the winner, and awarding the second prize to Zan Ross of WA. And Andrew Burke judged the Peter Cowan Writers' Centre Poetry Award (2001), selecting Judy Johnson for her poem 'Thirty-four Years On'.

Writers-in-residence programs also supported new writers through workshops and

the like, as well as through modelling. Thus, Anthony Lawrence, Tasmanian Poet and recent novelist (*In the Halflight* [Pan Macmillan]) was Writer in Residence at the Peter Cowan Writers' Centre during the April-May period. And Alan Wearne, who has been a first-semester Writer in Residence at Curtin University for the past three years, garnered both the 2002 NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry and the Book of the Year award for *The Lovemakers – Vol. 1* (Penguin).

With regard to prizes, as we go to press, WA writers garner recognition nationally as well as locally. Tim Winton's widely acclaimed *Dirt Music* (Pan MacMillan), set in a fishing community at a mythical place called White Point in WA, won both the 2002 Miles Franklin and the 2002 NSW Premier's Fiction Awards. Winton has also been invited to be an Australian Consul representative to the Hong Kong International Literary Festival in May 2003 (this year's representatives were Brian Dibble from Perth, and Linda Jaivin of Sydney and Dewi Anggraeni of Melbourne). And, in another medium, Philip Royce's film of Doris Pilkington/Garimara's 1996 *Follow the Rabbit-proof Fence* (UQP) has generated international attention.

West Australian writing, and writing about Western Australia, finds key recognition through the WA Premier's Book Awards, presented this year on 24 May. There were two non-fiction awards: John Bailey's, *The White Divers of Broome* (Pan MacMillan), also short-listed for the Nettie Palmer Prize

for Non-Fiction in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards; and Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (MUP). The Poetry Prize went to Dorothy Hewett for *Halfway Up the Mountain* (FACP), also short-listed for the NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry. Deborah Lisson won The Children's Book award for *The Yankee Whaler* (Scholastic); Julia Lawrinson won the Young Adults Award for *Obsession* (FACP); and Sally Riley and Archie Weller won the Script Award for *Confessions of a Headhunter*. Tim Winton garnered the prize for the best novel, *Dirt Music*, as well as the Premier's Award for the same book. Speaking from the US, Winton said he would donate his award winnings to save WA's Ningaloo Reef in the Northwest from tourism development.

Such listings indicate the range and energy of WA writing and publishing across the many genres of what we now call the 'culture industry', and which we experience collectively as the 'stuff' that tells us who we are – in Western Australia, in Australia.

And there is a wide range of other venues (temper democratic) of literary representation and literary talk in WA that together put into dialogue who we are (bias Australian). So, for example, the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of Western Australia runs a variety of seminars and public forums that have included writers like Barry Hill and critics like Lowitja O'Donoghue. Edith Cowan University's Centre for

Landscape and Language has brought Les Murray to Western Australia. And Humanities at Curtin University has featured speakers like Judith Halberstrom, US film critic and cultural studies scholar, in its Research Seminar Program.

Comparably, important WA publishers – Magabala Press, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, the University of Western Australia Press – critically contributed to literary conversations. Notable among many significant recent publications is Scott Cane's *Pila Nguru* (FACP), the story of the first community to achieve full native title rights to land in mainland Australia. Cane deploys essays, traditional stories, interviews and thirty-two stunning images painted by the Spinifex people to convey their achievement, their law, their meaning of country. And – fortunate synergy – the story of the Spinifex people was also told through another genre when Black Swan Theatre Company presented the WA premier of *Mamu*, scripted by Scott Rankin and Trevor Jamieson, and directed by Andrew Ross.

But perhaps the most remarkable event in the calendar of literary events in WA these past months took place alongside established venues (writers' centres, universities, prize-giving bodies, publishers, theatres, and the like). In late March All Saints' College held a literary festival over three days. The program was made up of some forty-five writers of local, national, international and indigenous backgrounds, together talking about a broad range of genres, interests and

socio-political positions. Literature Festival 2002 was a great success, not just in numbers, but even more in realising for a young readership (and accompanying adults) its thematic – “Read, write . . . let your imagination take flight . . .”

Regarding festivals, in her *overland* ‘From the West’ report in the Spring of 2000 Susan Hayes called the Perth International Writers’ Festival 2000 “first class”. And, like many others, she expressed her disappointment at the cancellation of the 2001 Writers’ Festival, which she attributed to personality clashes, Festival overspending, and the University of Western Australia’s withdrawing financial support. She asked “[i]n a State where the arts are badly funded, can we justify spending millions of dollars for three weeks of the year?”

And so, looking forward, I am pleased to report that the Perth International Writers’ Festival, begun in 1978, will resume in 2003 (7–16 February). It will be a collaborative effort of the University of Western Australia and Curtin University, with Wendy Were as its Manager. With a global theme of conflict and response, it will feature international and Australian novelists, poets, playwrights, journalists and essayists discussing all things writerly in an environment that strongly encourages open and rigorous debate.

Anchored in our present moment, the 2003 Perth International Writers’ Festival will want to look both backwards and forwards – something good for those of us

who want to take part in conversations about literature in all its many forms, conversations that seem to make our lives somewhat better, somewhat more understandable.

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Fighting the Cultural Cold War: ‘Shock Squads’ and Youth Festivals

Phillip Deery

DURING THE COLD WAR it was axiomatic that penetration of the Communist Party and its ‘front’ organisations by the security services should be extensive, deep and ongoing. To win this war, one must ‘know thy enemy’ well. Far more than mere surveillance, the placement of ‘plants’ inside the Communist Party yielded information that, usually, was reliable and valuable. Evidence of infiltration by ASIO is now so abundant that mystery has surrendered to history. We may now judge communists’ suspicions as justified, not – as they once were – the product of fevered imaginings from a paranoid period.

It is from archival releases that we learn of such infiltration. The files of the NSW branch of the security services during the early Cold War contain one example. An exceptionally detailed 136-page report on the Eureka Youth League (EYL) reveals the extent to which the security plant was

accepted and trusted. The file contains original photographs taken by the ASIO informant of EYL members. These are not surveillance photographs: the subjects are smiling into the camera. The informant also attended several EYL picnics; was aware of the sexual liaisons (“in the women’s tents”) at an EYL camp in rural Victoria; knew that on the right arm of an EYL functionary, Roy Newitt, a small tattoo with the name ‘Phyllis’ was scrolled; and promised to “get further information” from June Worth, a “brunette, good looking EYL girl” about her “communist boyfriend” who worked at the Woomera rocket range as a rocket tester and who “boasted . . . that he beat the Security Screen”.¹

A different type of penetration occurred in Great Britain in the mid 1950s. In late 2001 a remarkable file was released by the Public Record Office in London. It concerned Soviet-inspired youth festivals and how they could be undermined. A policy was formulated in the Foreign Office whereby English teams attending these festivals would be planted not with MI5 or Special Branch operatives but – to use the Whitehall phrase – ‘shock squads’ of young conservatives. This article describes, for the first time, this technique.²

The proposal to use ‘shock squads’ was first hatched in the British Embassy in Warsaw. The British Ambassador to Poland, Sir Anthony (‘Paddy’) Noble, wrote to Paul Grey at the Foreign Office in early 1956. The trigger was the Fifth World Youth Festival held in Warsaw

in July–August 1955.³ It attracted nearly thirty thousand participants including a team of athletes from the United Kingdom. According to Noble, the Poles were “very quick to distinguish between the ‘political’ delegations and the ‘non-political’ athletic teams”. He observed that they were reluctant to talk to the former but “frank with the latter”. Here was the opening. He proposed that “small and relatively unobtrusive” British athletics teams, led by “carefully briefed team managers”, should accompany the communist-led delegations to youth festivals. A new opportunity for spreading the anti-communist message and diluting the pro-Soviet propaganda behind the Iron Curtain was thus created. Britain’s status in sport would assist this role: “we still have a great reputation as a nation that plays the game in every sense of the word”.⁴ Noble sent copies of his memorandum to British embassies or legations in Moscow and all Eastern bloc countries. In London it was decided to upgrade all future correspondence, related to this proposal, to the ‘Top Secret and Personal’ category.

Within the normally cautious corridors of Whitehall, Noble’s idea was received and endorsed with enthusiasm. One official, in fact, urged extension rather than restraint: “The policy of infiltration should not be restricted to big ‘open’ gatherings like Youth Festivals, but should also be applied to some of the smaller Communist gatherings, e.g. a meeting of the International Organisation of Journalists”. He also hoped that

other Western countries would also send such squads.⁵ Equally positive was the response from Geoffrey Furlonge, head of the British Legation in Sofia:

I greatly welcome your ‘shock squad’ idea. It ought to appeal to adventurous youth, and should be immensely useful until the Communists tumble to it. When they do, their only recourse will be to exclude all British representatives from these conferences. We could then ourselves publicize our exclusion, with possibly salutary effects, particularly in our colonial empire.

The ‘adventurous youth’ came from the ranks of a pro-Tory association: the Federation of Unionist and Conservative University Students. It was contacted by the Foreign Office with the advice that ‘suitable individuals’ be sent to world youth festivals scheduled for 1957 in Moscow and 1959 in Vienna.

Before then, however, there was much discussion within the Foreign Office about what would happen if the communists did ‘tumble’ to the idea. A.E. Davidson disagreed with Furlonge’s view that all British delegates would be banned if the host communist countries discovered what was happening. He argued that a blanket ban would attract publicity that would be “too unfavourable” and “very damaging” to the communist cause. The Cold War, after all, was in large measure a propaganda war: a battle for hearts and minds in which words had replaced bullets.

Davidson believed, instead, that local Youth Festival committees would be turned into “screening agencies”. While sustaining the illusion that the Festivals were still open to all, they would, in reality, permit only those individuals who were either sympathetic to communism or politically innocent. This applied to the large ‘open’ gatherings like sporting festivals. If, on the other hand, the communists found that smaller and more specialised gatherings were being penetrated by “our people”, then it was more probable that the communists would “tighten up their system” to ensure that “only positively approved delegates are present”. A third point of view, expressed by Grey, was that in order to “counter our new tactics” the communist organisers of youth festivals would, reluctantly, “have to accept the presence of our ‘shock squads’” since there would be insufficient time to vet all the delegates. All they could do, he argued, was “simply improve machinery for suppressing them on the spot”. These differences of opinion were matters of degree not substance. Certainly, the possibility existed that their ruse would be discovered. But it was a risk worth taking. As one official put it bluntly, “we can create a fair amount of trouble . . . at these gatherings”.

The Foreign Office file does not reveal whether this new stratagem was, in fact, discovered by local communists or, if so, how they reacted. There is no reference to it in any of the literature on the British Communist Party. But

what we can reconstruct is the *modus operandi* of these 'shock squads'. Prior to departure the selected delegates were thoroughly briefed on the country in which the festival or event was to be held, especially on matters such as local living conditions. To ensure that the briefing was topical and current, comments from the Embassy or Mission in the country concerned were sought. They would also be briefed "not only in the right questions to ask but in the right answers to give to the arguments likely to be encountered". The following was also proposed:

Members of the 'shock squads' should be as naively Western as possible in their attitude, 'assuming' that services and facilities would be as freely available as in their own country and being shocked and surprised to find this was not so. Thus they could propose . . . to visit some neighbouring town instead of accompanying the rest of the party to the inevitable cultural institute, or, ask for a shop selling e.g. a good map of the town, English newspapers or razor blades.

In Soviet bloc countries where civilians, allegedly, hungered for newspapers, foreign periodicals and literature, 'planted' British delegates could "casually leave odd copies of illustrated magazines etc. in hotel rooms, station waiting rooms and other semi-public places".

These methods of propaganda were oblique. More direct methods were also recommended, especially "the

disruption of the progress of the Festivals by inspired speeches, awkward questions etc.". Given that such events were usually so thoroughly stage-managed – unanimity of opinion was standard, dissenting voices were rare – it must have bewildered, at least initially, the Festival organisers. Some young conservative activists at the 1957 World Youth Festival in Moscow, "spent much time making contacts with the Russians". They obviously met one of Noble's stated requirements that they be "young men capable of holding their own in any political argument". And in what would have been a courageous act then for any Russian citizen, they also spoke on street corners. According to an approving Foreign Office official, "The authorities did not like it but they seem to have had no suspicion of any official inspiration". The secret propaganda war, even on this small scale, was being successfully waged. Subverting communism was the aim; duplicity was the means.

The decision to send these shock squads of young Tories to infiltrate the East was influenced by the political colour of their intended Trojan Horse – sporting teams. The fact that government officials in the mid 1950s were so concerned by the actual or apparent ideological position of British sporting associations is indicative of how few institutions were exempt from enlistment, by either side, in the Cold War. We would assume, for example, that the English Table Tennis Association was a

relatively innocuous body. But such assumptions are coloured by our contemporary context. Fifty years ago it was deemed dangerous if any section of the population were susceptible to persuasion that the ideology of communism was morally superior to the democratic values of the West. Thus even table tennis players were contestants in the Cold War. The "situation" in their Association was "very bad" since their chairman was Ivor Montague, "a well-known Communist". The British Empire Weightlifters Association had a "fellow-traveller" as its Secretary which made it "impossible for us to brief the team". The Public Relations Officer of the Swimming Teachers' Association was "a notorious Communist sympathiser" who "use[d] his position to further Communist aims". Indeed, overall there was "a strong Communist influence" in the swimming organisations which made it "very difficult to keep swimmers in general politically in line".

However, the fears of these anxious Foreign Office officials should have been allayed by the confidential correspondence from the British embassies in Warsaw and Moscow during 1956. Sir Anthony Noble commented on the behaviour of British athletic associations that he observed at the Warsaw Youth Festival. He found the table tennis competitors did not show any sign of political bias and "very pleasant to deal with", while the British League of Racing Cyclists, sent to participate in a "cycle for peace" race were "sturdily non-political and . . . made an excellent

impression". His counterpart in Moscow, Richard Slater, commented on the British swimming team who visited Moscow in November 1955 and who attended a reception at the Embassy. Despite the organisation of swimming in the UK being "almost wholly under communist control" he found members of the team to be free from "indoctrination" and quite non-political; indeed, "they struck us as a totally unexceptional crowd". The conclusion therefore reached in the Foreign Office was twofold. First, that the level of communist influence or control at home did not determine actions abroad: the teams would not necessarily "behave badly behind the Iron Curtain". Second, that the politics of the officials of the sporting teams was far less important than the "political inclinations" of the members who visited communist countries under communist auspices. The task, then, was not to dislodge the organisers but to penetrate the rank and file; to make sure that teams travelling to Soviet-inspired events contained participants who were ostensibly ideologically neutral or naïve but in reality were the emissaries of anti-communism.

The just-released file on this official but highly secret policy of infiltrating sporting teams with shock squads of young Conservatives does not reveal how successful the efforts were. But it does open a small window onto a remarkable picture of Cold War intrigue and subterfuge. Much of this hidden history is only now beginning to emerge. The Cold War may

be over but its high investment in the propaganda battle, especially on the cultural front, holds salutary lessons for continuing clashes of ideologies.

ENDNOTES

1. National Archives of Australia (NSW Branch), SP 1714/1, N40393.
2. There appears no equivalent of these 'shock squads' in the US assuming that recent published studies are reliable. See Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-1961*, Macmillan, New York, 1997; Frances Stoner Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, Granta, London, 1999, Giles Scott-Smith & Hans Krabbendam, *The Cultural Cold War in Europe 1945-60*, Frank Cass, London, 2002.
3. Previous World Youth Festivals were held in Prague (1947), Budapest (1949), Berlin (1951) and Bucharest (1953).
4. PRO: FO 1110/876. Unless otherwise indicated all subsequent quotations are taken from this file 'U.K. Policy towards Communist-inspired Youth Festivals'.
5. However there is no evidence in ASIO files, such as those dealing with the Australian Student Labour Federation (NAA A6122, 1637-39) or the World Federation of Democratic Youth (NAA A1838, 69/1/1/16/3 Parts 1-2), that the technique was emulated in Australia.

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Len unable to Reason 'Footy' Issue

Len Reason

IN ALL MY many years as a subscriber to *overland*, I don't recollect football even being so much as mentioned in your appropriately biased pages. Now you make up for all those lost opportunities with

your Autumn theme issue! Lecturing on – can I believe it? – women's boxing, sport in general and – yes – Aussie Rules football in particular.

Of course you address the difficulties the left has historically had with sport. Sensitively, almost reverently. Momentarily, I find myself looking for a colour spread of outed lefty footy stars inside. But settle for the lively cartoons. Footy cartoons in *overland*! Need I say more?

First off, your unblushing use of the Australian Football League slogan to head the issue, prompts me to imagine you will explore what it is about our wonderful national sport that makes it 'more than a game'. I imagine you wondering in print whether it is its resemblance to a Nuremberg Rally? Or to a terrorist or, given your accepted slant, an anti-terrorist outrage? Or to an Oscar presentation? Probably all or none of these, I decide. And then, of course, the penny drops. It's because you are going to say that it is, and almost always has been, a Religion. And now is *officially* a religion. I turn the pages confidently anticipating you to say:

Officially? Yes. Remember that our 'born again' Prime Minister stated last September that it would be 'sacrilege' to announce the date of the election on Grand Final Day. And recall his revelation that Brisbane would be 2001 Premiers. And somewhat later, that he obeyed the Voice that told him to jettison the hard-won principle of separation of

church and state. And to appoint an Archbishop as Governor General. A Queensland one, of course, given that state's heaven-sent success at footy.

This could yet be a good old-fashioned piece of hard-line *overland* cynicism like that, I reassure myself.

Instead, of course, I find a deceptively well rationalised editorial paragraph to explain that some lefties see footy as “a form of the ‘opiate of the masses’ line, which sees sport as one of the ways the ruling class gets the working class to take its eye ‘off the ball’ of political agitation”. But such as they are today in a minority and out of date, I learn. Hey! I think that’s where my beloved contemporary Stephen Murray-Smith and I once were.

But you maintain that a majority now see sport as a “positive expression of the culture and desire of the people . . . Something which needs to be *defended* (my italics) against the rapaciousness of capital’s acquisition and commodification of cultural forms throughout history.” Who needs defending? They’ve already won most of it including whatever that long fifteen-letter word rejected by my spell-check means. Isn’t Aussie footy the most successful, the most media-dominated, commercialised and capitalised activity in the country?

A third position, which you say has been discarded by all right thinkers – sorry, I mean right left-thinkers – sees sport as a . . . “social activity disconnected from the central political

and economic aspects of society . . . either insignificant or significant only on its own terms.” Then you comment irreverently that such a lenient attitude can allow even your associate editor to barrack for John Elliott’s football team (Carlton)! With the implication that John Elliott is not a nice man and this represents a distasteful compromise. But doesn’t most of today’s religion allow for a degree of compromise?

OK, your theme issue has got me in a state of lasting confusion, as it’s maybe meant to. After leaving your hitherto uncontaminated journal for TV and the (delayed) transmission of the extraordinarily hyped-up preambles to the Collingwood versus Richmond game, the first of the season, I find my own long-established faith in football faltering.

As the two teams face one another pre-match in parallel lines, it seems to me that their heads hang and they look puzzled and embarrassed by the level of opposing brands of idolatry and the deafening triumphalist music. Not to mention the unmentionable, the amplified enthusiasm of Collingwood Chairman/ impartial commentator Eddie Maguire.

And I wonder how many supporters and even players are starting to feel similar qualms? I know I have to be careful with such heretical assumptions since, as a Queenslander of those days, my dedication to the Australian game is not hierarchical. I am a convert. Not a supporter by blood, but by marriage. I confess I was 24

years of age before I even saw an Australian Rules game, which was between two scratch army teams at the war-time army camp of Bonegilla, near Albury. Which merely confirmed my dismissal of the game as aerial ping-pong.

Not guessing that when I lost my heart, soon after, to a young woman from Melbourne, my allegiance to a different brand of football went with it. And that together we were to share many besotted times in support of her inherited team of Essendon. And that I would eventually be a member of a coterie, a supporters’ group as dedicated, even as fanatical, as any supporter of a fundamentalist religion.

And later, additionally, be a supporter of the Daylesford football team in central Victoria. During those days when we had to change our choice of butcher to Cyril Langdon because he was President of the football club. And had to scrape the bottom of the barrel to afford the payment of an unheard of \$150 per match to a full forward who had played three games with Collingwood firsts quite a long time earlier.

Now I find myself disturbed by *overland*, with its mandatory re-thinks in this unexpected area. I’m no longer sure where I stand. Tremblingly wondering whether, if possible, I would prefer a return to those halcyon days of country football support, rather than be enmeshed, entreated, conned and, yes, sickened by the ruthlessly commercialised religiosity of the big league.

But then, as I write, Essendon is yet to play its first

game of the season. And as everyone knows, I have a big mouth, but I'm weak as piss when it comes to footy.

Len Reason, 82 this month, has been writing a weekly column for the Hepburn Shire Advocate (Daylesford) for over a year, sometimes missing the point but never a deadline. In 1939 he was introduced to the Left in the Unity Theatre in Brisbane, for whom he wrote agit prop sketches and some longer plays. After reluctant service in New Guinea and elsewhere during the war he returned to write radio plays and other stuff. He left the Communist Party and later joined an ad agency as a writer in Melbourne in 1950 and stayed long enough to become its Chairman. He was founding Chair of the Victorian Council for the Arts and was awarded an OBE in 1980 when he 'retired'.

Reply to Laurie Duggan

Niall Clugston

THE WORKING CLASS poetry debate has become sharply polarised. One side calls the other 'elitists', while the other side calls them 'dogmatists'. And to some extent they're both right.

The dogmatists (champions of 'working class poetry') have a fixed idea of what poetry ought to be and dismiss anything else. The elitists in turn dismiss them.

Laurie Duggan denies being elitist ('On Working Class Poetry', *overland* 166). He claims to evaluate poetry based on quality, and he does make a good case for the recognition of poetic 'craft' as opposed to the naïve view of poetry as simply 'authentic' self-expression. However, in his critique of actual poetry (in particular the

working class poems in *overland* 165), he focuses not on quality, but on context. He refers disparagingly to workplace poetry-readings, stand-up comedy routines, creative writing courses, and even graffiti on toilet walls. Between the lines he is saying that certain types of poetry don't belong in 'literary magazines', that poetry in general doesn't belong in certain places (like factories), and that certain topics (like working class concerns) don't belong in poetry. His argument boils down to saying people should know their place. This is quintessentially elitist.

Behind this debate is the broader issue of poetic modes. Ninety-nine per cent of poetry today could be described as introspective lyricism. While this is a valid form of poetry (a modern-day descendent of Romanticism via depoliticising Victorianism), it excludes huge swathes of English poetry from 'Paradise Lost' to 'The Wasteland' and well known poets from Donne to Byron – to say nothing of poetry in other languages. Unfortunately, due to the overwhelming dominance of this one poetic mode, anything that falls outside this is now designated as 'bad poetry'. Hence 'working class poetry' can be condemned simply for being 'political' or 'social comment'. And of course the more radical the opinions, the worse it is. But putting politics aside for a moment, what can we say about a poetic discourse that has no place at all for didacticism, satire, wit, narrative, or epic? In a word, introspective lyricism tends towards

narcissism. But while the poets are gazing at their own reflections in the pool, not only – as the dogmatists would say – is the world around them burning, but poetry itself is imploding. Or, to put it in working class language, disappearing up its own arse.

This poetic mode monopoly is the very source of the self-indulgent misconception of poetry that Duggan attacks. Poetry is seen simply as a dreamy form of self-expression. It doesn't take a Marxist to see how the ideological roots of this are buttressed by the individualistic credo of capitalism, but that's another topic again. Faced with such a pervasive and self-destructive poetic culture, perhaps a fair amount of dogmatism on the part of the 'working class poets' is useful.

Niall Clugston had a poem published in overland 165.

Meanderings on race

Neil Hooley

IF NOTHING ELSE, Marcia Langton's piece on racism in Australia today (*overland* 166) forces this European to consider carefully some of his most deeply held political views and how he conducts his daily life. This is a good thing. Writing that is essentially polemical however can have the opposite effect, that of digging the trenches deeper between people who, at the moment, may see the world differently. I wonder what Langton had in mind.

Unfortunately, Langton

promotes a strong overall impression that 98 per cent of the Australian population are racist, cannot understand, are the enemy and are to be excluded from one of the great social movements of the modern world, that of respect, reconciliation and recognition between peoples and cultures. I doubt if Nelson Mandela has this view.

Defining the 'left'

IN HER STRIDENT yet simplistic attack on the Australian left and its position on racism and the Aboriginal question, nowhere does Langton define whom she is talking about. I have been under the impression that the terms 'left' and 'right' have something to do with the ideologies of socialism and capitalism and the different strategies that different people adopt in making progress towards each. Some argue the 'history is dead' position and that the terms have lost all meaning. In the UK, there is talk of a 'third way' although this seems to have been quickly outmoded recently with discussion of a 'liberal imperialism' in a globalised world. For the powerful of course.

I first came across 'left' views in my early union days, particularly from older colleagues who had fought fascism and had come through the cold war and peace movement. I admired these people enormously, for their dedication, their activism and the way that they had devoted their lives to peace and justice whatever their employment or economic circumstances. They continued to demonstrate such

characteristics in their opposition to conscription and the Vietnam War. Only a small proportion were socialist, but all had a commitment to democracy and dignity for ordinary people.

As the world situation has changed, particularly since the Second World War, the socialist experience has declined in Australia and elsewhere, but has not been extinguished. The left approach to racism and Aboriginal Australians has no doubt gone through many twists and turns including the past twenty years of Thatcherite rationalism as the social and economic conditions have altered and as good people have attempted to make sense of their lives and to assist their neighbours. Within the socialist/non-socialist left there is a wide divergence of standpoint on how to proceed. The fact that some Aboriginal people disagree with the views and actions of some non-Aboriginal people and vice versa does not demonstrate inherent animosity between them.

There is great solidarity between working people on most issues, the grand narratives of exploitation, poverty, racism, war and peace. Violence is still the determining feature of modernity. To not distinguish between the working class which has such interests and the bourgeoisie which controls wealth, land and power, is extremely short-sighted and misleading. Decade by decade, we should always try to unite as many as possible for social progress, rather than lashing out in all directions. Patience is a better strategy than impetuosity.

Solidarity

LANGTON'S EXAMPLES drawn from East Timor show the importance of learning from the international experience. This is what we learnt from Vietnam as well. In both cases, we saw peoples endure great hardship against seemingly overwhelming odds, yet the ideas of 'a just cause enjoys abundant support' and 'everything comes to those who wait' have proven to be accurate. They indicate that very strong action has to be taken from time to time combined with careful, long-term strategic thinking. Much of this is concerned with the gaining of allies, of winning diverse support for a just cause. The people of South Africa, Palestine, Northern Ireland are grappling with these issues right now.

How do people confront their own ingrained racism and prejudice? While it is necessary to have victories along the way, the real essence of this question involves major changes to the economic and political conditions that generate racist views in the first place, views buried deep in property, wealth, power and authority. As Langton suggests, we must have practical ways of moving forward, rather than pontificate from a position of comfort. In a previous time, such ways included the building of socialist societies after fascism had been defeated and a number of inspirational attempts were made. These days, the left struggles to theorise globalisation and to provide alternative pathways.

Whatever our personal

circumstances, we can advance ideas that trend towards democratic practice and not towards elitism and privilege. This can take place in all types of social organisations such as unions, community and neighbourhood groups, schools and universities, sporting clubs and senior citizen meetings. Involvement in parliamentary parties is also an option at various levels. At all of these gatherings, people come together for mutual interest and make decisions about their employment, communities and families. There are always choices to be made, those that will support a broadly progressive or conservative present and future.

Good people everywhere imbued with social justice can be hit over the head and told what is right, that they are racist and exploitative. Or others can work carefully and patiently to create the conditions where good people confront their values and practices on a daily basis and can change. Solidarity is better than division.

Struggle for ideas

A NUMBER OF quotes from Noel Pearson illustrate the personal determination that is required over many years for each of us to be immersed in experience and to reflect on it as the basis for the development of a political strategy for rectification. It is usually the case that serious questions, particularly those on a national or international scale, take a long time for resolution. The collapse of the Russian Revolution after seventy years can be seen as a major defeat

for socialism, or a necessary step along the way, one step forwards, two steps backwards. The fact that Noel Pearson has struggled valiantly to pursue the interests of the Cape York people is a story of inspiration for the working class, not one that shows a journey of almost inevitable reversal.

If each of us could document the key events of our lives and how we have handled them, I am sure that there would be a catalogue of strengths and weaknesses. The same is true of ideas and the decisions surrounding them. At some point in time rather than another, it was appropriate to suggest a national health scheme, to design a jumbo jet rather than a tiger moth, to think about the cloning of humans. We deal with these issues as best we can when they arise. In Australia, citizens have voted against conscription and the republic in the space of a hundred years. These are momentous events that sometimes go the way we would like and sometimes not.

Langton uses the expression 'postcolonial', again without definition, but whether we have reached that stage in Australia can be seriously debated. Similarly, the term 'postmodern' may have influence in some quarters, but not others. These are complex ideas that need to run their course through history and experience before being generally seen as accurate descriptors of what is good for working-class people. While we might all hope that history can be speeded up, the concepts and practices of racism must go

through a like process. The navigational strength and emotion of Noel Pearson and colleagues is an example of this.

Two-way understanding

I DISAGREE WITH Langton on her use of terms like 'white supremacist' when speaking of opposition to black views. Certainly I cannot agree that justice and self-determination will never occur for the Aboriginal people and that Aboriginal people alone understand poverty and exploitation. Is it correct that only Aboriginal people have the correct view on Aboriginal issues? This surely flies in the face of history. It seems to me for example that native title provides an opportunity for all of us to do what has been discussed above, to put forward practical ideas appropriate for the times that trend towards a democratic and egalitarian future. This is the position that faces the working class the world over.

My humble suggestion is the development of 'two-way' approaches across the political spectrum, where progressive, perhaps even left-thinking people, come together to do the hard work of trying to understand different cultures and backgrounds, to explain different world views through the experience of formulating community-based policies and then, of reflection on how all that goes. This can be thought of as 'practice into theory and return', the idea that practice informs theory and theory guides practice. The notion of 'two-way' understanding can inform and guide a wide range

of issues from legal, health and education matters, to those of native title, land rights and self-determination.

I can apologise for the wrongs that have been committed against Aboriginal Australians since white settlement, I can support land rights and other matters of

justice, I can attempt to appreciate a long history of culture and I can get away from the coffee latte cities and meet traditional Aboriginal communities. But in the end all this will fail unless a genuine process of democratic two-way learning and understanding is implemented step-by-step over

an extensive period of time. All citizens can participate. Those on the left will attempt to do what they can with as much generosity of spirit and solidarity of which we are capable.

Neil Hooley is a lecturer in the School of Education, Victoria University.

News from the Blue Blue News

Gradual Elimination of Patrick White from National Consciousness Nears Completion

“THE GRADUAL ELIMINATION of Patrick White from the Australian national consciousness is nearing completion,” said Professor Thurston Graham of ANU yesterday.

“We’re pretty much in the final phase,” said Graham. “Soon all of White’s books will be out of print, and the whole disturbing chapter in our history that was Patrick White will be closed.”

White, winner of the 1973 Nobel prize for literature, has been a source of great embarrassment to the Australian book trade for a number of years, with his cosmopolitanism, his interest in the basic human quest for meaning, and his ability.

“If there are three things that Australian literature can do without it’s cosmopolitanism, interest in the basic human quest for meaning, and ability,” said Graham. “I mean, White used to edit. Hey, that’s okay if you’re German or French. But we’re Australians. Deal with it, Patrick.”

Graham noted that White was also homosexual. “And not in the perfectly acceptable flamboyant pink-dollar-queer-lit-reclamation-mardi-gras sort of way that we’ve all come to love. He was one of those fey queens who likes art and does the washing up. It makes my skin crawl.”

Minister for the Arts Senator Richard Alston praised Australian publishers for their efforts.

“The last thing Australia needs is well-written books exploring our national identity,” said Alston. “As with the elimination of Gerald Murnane, the Australian publishing industry is to be commended for its relentless commitment to replacing literature of excellence with uncontroversial crap. Here is my lid. Consider it dipped.”

David Marr now works at the ABC.

This is taken from issue 15 of the blue blue news, a satirical website available at www.thebluenews.com

floating fund

overland is once again grateful to those generous supporters who have donated to the magazine. We would like to thank the following:

\$150 A.M.H.; \$75 J.McL., C.T.; \$50 F.S., B.J.S.; \$24 J.M., J.S., T.T.; \$20 T.I., B.G., E.A.W.; \$14 J.A., V.B., G.B., R.H.G., E.W., J.F., K.P.; \$12 B.B., V.O'D.; \$9 R.M.; \$8 A.B., J.P.; \$7 Mr & Mrs J.A.S.; \$5 A.B.; \$4 H.S.B., R.H.&M.R., R.W., T.G.P.; \$2 L.A., M.L.: totalling \$711.

AUSTRALIA 2009

by Lofa

Culture Incorporated will now be allowed to collect a licensing fee from people singing in the shower. This is in line with government attempts to upgrade Australian culture...



But what does the man in the street think of this?



It's a great idea. Requiring poets to register and pay a fee has eliminated the cowboys from that industry.



You don't mind that certain songs will be forbidden?



'course not! Who wants to sing 'die Internationale' in the shower!

It's a wonderful idea. I'll gladly pay.



Long overdue!



User pays. It makes sense!



So the verdict is anonymous: the public is 100% behind the idea



This broadcast was brought to you by Culture Incorporated



General Bedlam

Nathan Hollier

Paul Barry: *Rich Kids: How the Murdochs and Packers lost \$950 million in One.Tel* (Bantam Books, \$45).

PAUL BARRY IS a tall man with a permanent smile, an open manner, and an educated English accent suggesting intellect, wit and confidence. He uses his charm to good effect in winning the confidence of people. Real investigative journalism is probably rarer now than ever, and Barry's is of a particularly high standard. He is attracted and suited to the study of powerful figures and has written on corporate high-fliers including Kerry Packer and Alan Bond, whose supposed dementia was famously drawn into question when during a lapse into sanity he rang Barry to abuse him. While Barry's civilised demeanour may invite the trust of his privileged subjects, he seems on the whole more amused by than endeared to them, and his Oxford training in economics, politics and philosophy has apparently imbued in him both a practical capacity to follow a paper trail and analyse corporate behaviour, and a critical perspective. The 'faults' of this book are perhaps endemic to the genre: there is no real contextualisation of events within broader political, social, technological and historical processes, nor even an evaluation of the prevailing policy framework.

Rich Kids is first and foremost a story about Jodee Rich and the equally spectacular successes and failures of his business career. While still in his twenties Rich made the *Business Review Weekly* 'Rich List' during the 1980s with his computer software company Imagineering, but was removed from the board shortly afterwards when it was revealed that Imagineering's impressive share price and market capitalisation disguised a fundamentally flawed management structure and the complete absence of any sensible business plan. While Rich had been successful in obtaining major contracts and financial input, in cutting advantageous deals and selling the idea of

himself as a successful entrepreneur to the Australian media, all factors which pushed share prices up, he was, according to Barry, almost pathologically incapable of facing up to problems. He would not cut his losses in unprofitable sectors or commit the time or employ the staff necessary to ensure that demand for his products did not disappear. Essentially, suggests Barry, Rich wanted it all but mistakenly thought he would be able to get it through his own personality and self-promotion alone, without the hard work of ensuring his product was of a comparable standard to that of his competitors. Eventually, after various ingenious, probably unethical and possibly illegal tactics of disguising his corporation's rotten core, the truth became apparent, the whole paper edifice collapsed in an instant, and Rich departed with only his millions to assuage his disgrace. Rich's experience with Imagineering is relevant because the essential features of it occur again in the case of One.Tel, the company he founded with Brad Keeling. *Rich Kids* is also a story about Keeling, Rodney Adler, James and Kerry Packer and Lachlan and Rupert Murdoch.

Jodee was born in New York in 1960 to Steven and Gayle Rich (formerly Richheimer). Steven worked in his family's company, Hunter Douglas, and later founded, with David Jones and John Fairfax, Traveland. With property investments in Australia and elsewhere, he was a multimillionaire. Gayle was influenced by New Age thought, which she apparently passed on to Jodee, who flew a Feng Shui master around the world to 'balance' One.Tel offices. Jodee attended the 'elite' Cranbrook school in Sydney, as did Adler and James Packer. Young Jodee was extremely bright and well adjusted. He started his own business, in which several friends were employed, at the age of twelve, selling tropical fish and aquariums. At Sydney University, which Jodee attended in his Porsche, he gave up medicine to concentrate on economics and law, employed an old Cranbrookian to take notes for him, made his first serious money trading gold with Adler and founded Imagineering. After that flopped he spent a few years

doing whatever millionaires do when they're not working and then, via his personal contacts in business and government and on the strength of his own confident personality, created One.Tel.

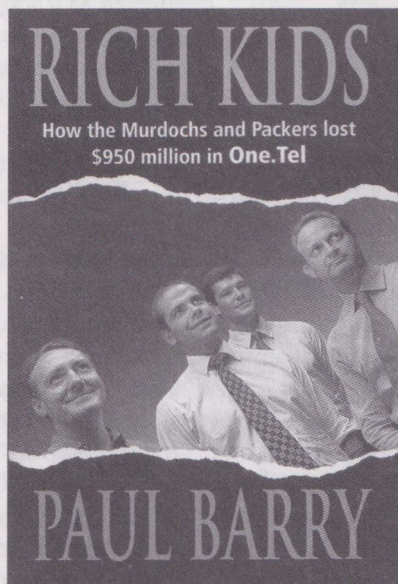
Partly through Rich's friendship with James Packer and partly because of the understandable desire of the Packers and Murdochs to profit from the market's near-insane enthusiasm for dot-com and telco companies, Rich and Keeling then entered into an arrangement with these families and their shareholders to establish their own telecommunications network. The ambitious plan was to rival the only network providers, Telstra and Optus. However, the company purchased their network spectrum from the Australian government at a greatly inflated price, shortly before the dot-com bubble burst in April 2000. Having outlaid too much for the license, One.Tel was never able to get its network working effectively, offered ridiculous, unprofitable deals and then alienated hundreds of thousands of consumers as well as dealers and suppliers, with abysmal service. Evidence suggests that Rich and his team relied on creative accounting and innumerable other mechanisms of disguising and deferring the corporation's problems, which only became truly apparent after he was forced to resign from the board.

The truth of these matters may be tested in court, which should be borne in mind before Barry's psychological portrait of Rich is accepted. Nevertheless, an interesting picture emerges of a 'rich kid' personality and culture. Rich is relentlessly positive about himself and his achievements and incapable of accepting the possibility that he may have made mistakes. His privileged upbringing, like that of the other men in this book, presented him with boundless

confidence and a burning desire to succeed in the most important sphere, that of business, from which the prosperity of society is imagined to emanate. Yet the absence of any real awareness of constraint or experience of trauma or human frailty makes him aggressive to those who would get in his way, absurdly defensive to any criticism and unable to focus

on the details upon which major corporations depend. Rich is described as being incredibly warm toward and interested in those of his 'calibre', to the point of stroking strangers from whom he wants money in business meetings, while being simultaneously a tyrant to his employees and obscenely rude to those, like waiters, providing him a service. The most interesting thing about this behaviour is the likelihood that it is profoundly cultural, ingrained, unrecognised. With the self-delusions of New Age psychology behind him and a wide-eyed faith that technology = the future, Rich eschews formal management hierarchies and claims to hate 'the establishment', while anyone who questions any aspect of his direction of the company is no longer "a One.Tel person" and is threatened with a pay cut or the sack. Though Rich, characteristically, flatly denies the assessment, Adler makes the perspicacious observation that all boys of powerful fathers "feel a special pressure to prove ourselves . . . Jodee is no exception". The rich kids in this book simply assumed that they were, like the phone network they were trying to build, 'the next generation'.

If Barry offers here a fascinating glimpse into ruling-class culture, his study also raises interesting questions about Australian society. While those in the business sector are fond of stating manfully that they have learned the lessons of the 1980s, it seems



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clear that without deeper changes in the organisation of society, most obviously a substantial increase in the regulatory role of government, there is nothing to stop these corporate disasters and their attendant social pain in the future. Business leaders, who as this book suggests are usually born into their social and economic role, are not capable of regulating their own behaviour, partly because even when they make monumental mistakes these are sheeted home to others, be they employees, financiers or journalists, who spoil their beautiful vision. And while money, Rich assures us, is not what they're after, his own experience suggests that whatever happens, those at the top will never feel the financial grief that their actions cause. He is not planning on handing back the \$6.9 million bonus he and Keeling received while presiding over a 1999–2000 loss of \$291 million, and the day before ASIC commenced investigations into his actions at One.Tel he transferred most of his property into his wife's name.

But Rich and his ilk are also products of their society and of the policy structure in which they operate. In a deregulated society, where wages are low and wealth is the universal sign not only of success but of social standing, speculation, or gambling, is rife. While poker machines are recognised as a social problem, the speculative purchase of stocks, whether by private investors or major super-fund institutions like Bankers Trust, which was burnt by Imagineering and then sportingly lined up to be burnt again by One.Tel, goes largely unremarked. In gambling, the bookmaker, the croupier or the machine always wins over time, and the longer the punter gambles, the greater are his or her chances of loss. Our society is currently being made even more unequal by the greed or desperation of share-market punters and the failure of government to facilitate genuine investment and ensure a secure social and economic environment. In Australia, as in the United States, entrepreneurs like Rich achieved their incredible wealth through the desires of vast numbers of people to gain a piece of, or to not be left behind in, what was hyped by the financial and corporate media as the electronic equivalent of a vast land grab. In such an environment, people seem almost resigned to their own exploitation, as they are resigned to being lied to by politicians. They expect corporate executives to be in it for themselves and so also are prepared to pull out their investment at the slightest whiff of trouble, meaning that even genuinely pro-

ductive companies have little incentive for long-term investment and planning. The culture as a whole comes to reflect this speculative, shallow and radically individualist policy framework.

The picture of corporate Oz that emerges in this book is one of general bedlam, in which unquenchable greed and massive ego fight over the spoils of new industries which our present government and Australian shareholders are falling over themselves to give to them. It is an entertaining read, punctuated with great quotes from Kerry Packer, mostly involving the word 'fuck'. He emerges as the only person with appropriate misgivings about Rich and One.Tel, appositely and characteristically summarising the whole affair as "a fuck up".

Nathan Hollier is overland's associate editor.

Idiot Wind

Jeff Sparrow

Imre Salusinszky & Gregory Melleuish: *Blaming Ourselves: September 11 and the Agony of the Left* (Duffy & Snellgrove, \$22).

ON 8 APRIL 2002, *Time* magazine outlined how the United States would arrange the torture of captured al-Qaeda commander Abu Zubaydah. It quoted a well-placed American military officer: "Someone is going to squeeze him. We've been out of that business for so long that it's best handled by others."

Time explained that such 'squeezing' would "most likely consist of drugs, mind games and sleep deprivation". "It's not pulling out fingernails," says the official, "but it's pretty brutal."

What reaction did such an impeccably mainstream news journal openly – even approvingly – discussing torture induce in the Australian media? Did it produce angry denunciations? Earnest columns asserting the inalienable dignity of the individual?

Well . . . no, actually. In fact, the incident passed almost entirely without comment, buried under the acres of newsprint speculating as to exactly what kind of nightmare weapons the US should use against Iraq.

That, paradoxically, is the difficulty faced by Imre Salusinszky and Gregory Melleuish in their collec-

tion *Blaming Ourselves: September 11 and the Agony of the Left*. The book marshalls Peter Coleman, Michael Warby, Keith Windschuttle and Miranda Devine and a selection of lesser names (the real big hitters of the far-Right seem wisely to have run screaming from the project) to document the Left's role in the wave of anti-Americanism that 11 September supposedly unleashed on Australia.

Yet anyone with even a tangential connection with reality knows that the Left today remains almost entirely frozen out of the public sphere. This exclusion was neatly demonstrated post-11 September, with every Australian newspaper editorialising in favour of the war in Afghanistan alongside the overwhelming majority of print columnists and TV talking heads. Compare and contrast with the UK, where figures like Robert Fisk, John Pilger, Tariq Ali, George Monbiot and Paul Foot regularly appeared in mass circulation newspapers. In Australia, the Left simply did not get a look in – which is why *Blaming Ourselves* resorts primarily to quotations not from books or articles or opinion pieces but the letters pages of *The Age* and the *SMH*!

Oh, of course – perhaps realising that selected passages from Cranky of North Balwyn and Disgruntled of Glebe do not a convincing case make – Salusinszky's troops scurry in all kinds of other directions as well. The journalist Roger Franklin tracks down an unnamed Triple-J staffer in Darwin, alleged to have pinned a picture of Osama up in the newsroom. Matthew Thompson regales us with tales of Amy and Melinda, anti-corporate activists who don't actually say anything whatsoever about 11 September but probably would have done, if given the chance, while Miranda

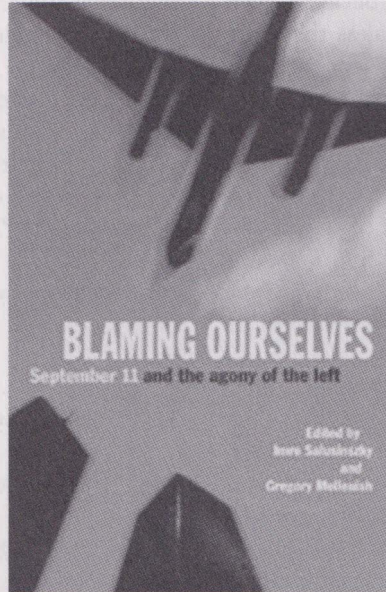
Devine flourishes her collection of semi-anonymous personal e-mails ("You are clearly a misinformed snot-nosed brat", begins one).

Others choose paths even less travelled. Simon Caterson, for instance, offers – for some purpose that entirely eludes me – a fragment of a James Bond story (I swear I'm not making this up), in which 007 debates philosophy with a mysterious desert Emir. Roger Sandall – author of *The Culture Cult: Designer Tribalism and Other Essays* – reveals that "WTO demonstrators are men and women who look superficially like us", before explaining that said protesters possess minds that "have somehow become horribly twisted . . . so warped that they are quite possibly clinically deranged".

Salusinszky and Mellueish do their best to give this muddle some kind of coherence in their introduction by rewarming the familiar Hansonite thesis about left-wing urban elites. The Australian Left forms a kind of institutional fifth column, supported by the public purse but hostile to commerce, and endlessly fulminating against democracy and liberal values. It's all apparently got something to do with the Enlightenment, a period which, our editors explain:

spawned 'grub street', full of creatures such as Marat, who specialised in defamation, vilification and pornography and, when the opportunity beckoned, violent revolution.

You get the idea. Intellectuals then and now are a pretty bad lot and, when the planes hit the Twin Towers, our modern Marats momentarily dropped their pornography to whoop and holler with delight (before dashing off a quick letter to *The Age*).



It's wacky stuff, made weirder by the perceived need to assert the bravery of contributors for aligning themselves with the entire media establishment and the world's sole superpower in opposition to Australia's letter-writers, e-mailers and picture-putter-uppers.

It's wacky stuff, made weirder by the perceived need to assert the bravery of contributors (for the most part themselves academics and journalists) in aligning themselves with the entire media establishment and the world's sole superpower in opposition to Australia's letter-writers, e-mailers and picture-putter-uppers.

But *Blaming Ourselves* reaches a truly bizarre climax with an Appendix where samples of left-wing anti-Americanism are paraded like apostates in the Kabul sports arena. For Salusinszky and Melleuish, leftism, it seems, encompasses anyone from Pamela Bone to Pauline Hanson (yes, really!). As for anti-Americanism, well, Humphrey McQueen makes the cut by arguing that "the best of US civilisation is represented by Mark Twain and W.E.B. du Bois, whom both Bush and Osama bin Laden would regard as devilish", while the National Tertiary Education Union is featured for suggesting that indiscriminate violence against 'suspects' or Muslims should not be tolerated.

Significantly, while the Appendix includes numerous liberal journalists simply for daring to initiate a discussion of the causes of 11 September, *Blaming Ourselves* itself contains one (rather interesting) essay by Sean Regan, which directly links the terrorist attack to US foreign policy. One can only conclude, then, that for Salusinszky and Melleuish, anti-Americanism consists less of what is said than who is doing the speaking.

Indeed, the whole exercise takes on a distinctly sinister tinge when an immediate precedent comes to mind – the register of disloyal US academics produced by Lyn Cheney and the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, which declared professors to be "the weak link in America's response to the attack".

Fortunately, in Australia the Right still doesn't have the power to do more than simply brandish its little lists. And, in that sense, there's something reassuring about *Blaming Ourselves* – it's frankly so bad that it will discredit the Right in general (and Salusinszky and Melleuish in particular) more than anyone else.

Yet the paucity of material gathered in it should also serve as a wake-up call for the Left. Surely we all know by now that the continuation of this 'war on terror' means more horrific acts conducted in our names. Who in Australia will stand up and say so?

Jeff Sparrow is author, along with sister, Jill Sparrow, of *Radical Melbourne: a secret history* (Vulgar Press, 2001).

Debunking the Master Illusion

Katherine Wilson

John Pilger: *The New Rulers of the World* (Verso, \$30).

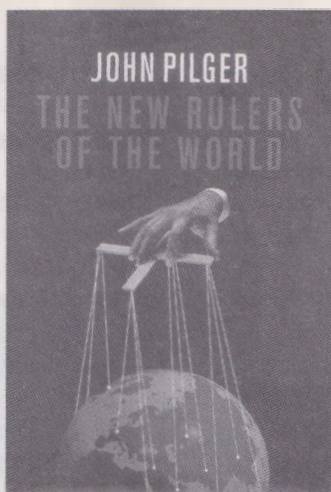
FEW PEOPLE RANKLE conservative hacks as much as John Pilger. Some charges against him are laughable (*The Courier-Mail's* recent charge of anti-Semitism); some more pernicious, implying that dissent itself is a direct threat to democracy and accusing Pilger of distortion. Despite meticulous citation of verifiable sources (IMF, UN and World Bank reports, *The Washington Post*, annual reports, his own primary sources), inevitably there are instances in his books where semantic dispute is possible. And this is where his critics attempt to trip him.

This is of no consequence against the heroic feat of his books, their utility to humanity, and in this respect *The New Rulers of the World* has little in common with others in its genre. Pilger is an original with his own limpid way of writing. There's no subservience to theoretical baggage, none of the smart sassy style of Naomi Klein and none of the sensory restraint of John Ralston Saul. Pilger writes from the bottom up, immersing the reader in the raw lives of oppressed people and revealing direct links to the decisions of the powerful.

The New Rulers of the World is an elegant, readable collection of four essays expanded from recent *Guardian* and *New Statesman* features and also from Pilger's recent film of the same name. Those expecting a revelation of 'new' rulers from this book may be disappointed. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Pilger doesn't see economic globalisation as a recent development governed by transnational corporations, but as the latest phase in age-old imperialist practices. In his introduction he states:

... the widely-held belief among anti-globalisation campaigners that the state has 'withered away' is misguided, along with the view that transnational corporate power has replaced the state, and by extension, imperialism. As the Russian dissident economist Boris Kagarlitsky points out, "Globalisation does not mean the impotence of the state, but the rejection by the state of its social functions, in favour of repressive ones, and the ending of democratic freedoms".

This distinction may not seem useful given that first world governments and influential international bodies are increasingly stacked with transnational CEOs or at least their bedfellows. Yet *The New Rulers of the World* paints large corporations more as the accessories and beneficiaries of free trade atrocities than the perpetrators. Pilger argues, convincingly, that economic globalisation is not an inevitable and unstoppable advance of capitalism, but a calculated series of policy decisions (government and military) ensuring continued colonial domination by the US and its allies.



The book is less conspiracy theory than shocking factual antidote to the propaganda we read daily. In fact, the essays – accessible, journalistic, graphic, and painstakingly footnoted – simply show cause and effect, and are sometimes frustratingly light on theory. His first, ‘The Model Pupil’ (a label bestowed on Indonesia by The World Bank) is, as Pilger describes it, the “story” of how what we now call globalisation was propagated in Indonesia’s bloodbath that brought General Suharto to power in 1965–66. Without becoming the story, Pilger immerses himself in it, giving the reader a first-hand account of the lives of those working in Indonesian sweatshop (or “labour camp”) conditions. He juxtaposes these (and other stories of some of the nearly 70 million people living in extreme poverty) with what are indisputably official lies (many repeated in *The Australian* by Greg Sheridan and Paul Kelly, and on public record by Hawke, Keating and Fischer), and also with company profits and government and military tactics. He shows how all the ingredients of economic globalisation – the forced labour, the exploitation of natural resources, the roles of the US military, foreign investors, the World Bank and the IMF – can be found in its model pupil, Indonesia. He exposes the direct and compliant ways the US and Australian governments partook in what can only be described as an Asian Holocaust, in which up to a million Indonesians were killed, while the first world remained ignorant.

The second essay, ‘Paying the Price’, is a heart-wrenching depiction of the people of Iraq, where the US and Britain’s use of depleted uranium in The Gulf War and the UN’s continued denial of treatment to contaminated victims has caused 47,000

horrifying child deaths in the past eight years. This, writes Pilger is “another vivid reminder of the different value of different lives. The Twin Towers victims are people. The Iraqi children are unpeople”. The essay reveals the interests that drive the UN to deem the supply of medicines to the people of Iraq a threat to world security; a denial of human rights that the CIA once called America’s ‘master illusion’; one which has prompted many high-ranking UN officials to resign in protest. He exposes the elaborate

way the US attempted to conceal its supply of weapons to Iraq and the farce of “no fly zonés” under which Kurds are bombed daily (killings that perform a “vital humanitarian task” for the Kurds, according to Tony Blair). He offers analysis as to why these actions have been critical for the maintenance of the American ‘world order’.

Of all the essays, the third, ‘The Great Game’, best illustrates how the ‘hidden hand’ of American state power is, through a combination of Orwellian propaganda campaigns, military tactics and embargoes, paving the way for western markets in the Middle East in morbidly parallel styles to its economic conquest of Indonesia. In a historical account, Pilger reveals the dirty underside of the so-called ‘war against terrorism’; the lack of ‘stability’ that deterred investors from financing oil and Washington’s generous endorsements of the Taliban until it no longer served US interests.

The fourth essay, ‘The Chosen Ones’, is an interesting choice for inclusion in this collection. A refresher from Pilger’s previous books, *A Secret Country* and *Welcome to Australia*, it contrasts Australia’s Olympic imagery with that of an unacknowledged Australian apartheid and perpetual injustice towards indigenous Australians. It discusses the pyrrhic victory of the Native Titles Act and the Stolen Generations denial campaign fronted by Howard and parroted by his cronies in Murdoch dailies and in *Quadrant*. So far Pilger has more or less allowed the facts to speak for themselves; now he can’t contain his editorialising: “Given an airing by wind-bag columnists and those who inhabit the netherworld of radio-talk bigotry, their denial of genocide has celebrated the work of second-rate academics, including one who has made the astonishing claim that

frontier killings could not possibly have taken place 'because most colonists were Christian to whom such actions were abhorrent'." This makes delicious reading, only tempered by the story of [name withheld for cultural reasons], one of the countless Aborigines who have died in police custody, and his family's struggle for justice against the litany of police lies; lies which the court acknowledged but to this day has failed to investigate.

The four essays seem disparate, but as a collection they reveal the nature of a modern imperialism, adding up to a plea for humanity with some shocking and revelatory fodder for activists (the lightest and most satisfying for me was the news that Amnesty International had cancelled Phillip Ruddock's membership). *The New Rulers of the World* is such an important book that it seems churlish to offer this small beef: as a whole it lacks shape. I put it down outraged, saddened, informed, inspired, armed with many disparate facts, but without a complete framework of understanding. The book has an excellent introduction but no conclusion (I hate to say it: it needed closure). Perhaps it was cobbled together for a publisher deadline. But against its contents, literary sensibilities of this kind are of little consequence.

Katherine Wilson is *overland's* assistant editor.

The media & political activism

Michael Hamel-Green

Sean Scalmer: *Dissent Events: Protest, the media and the political gimmick in Australia* (UNSW Press, \$39.95).

SEAN SCALMER'S NEW STUDY of forms of dissent and political action in the 1960s and 1970s offers many insights into the complex interplay between protest movements and media representations of protest. As an antiwar activist during the period, I found myself marvelling at the vividness and accuracy of Scalmer's accounts of the events themselves, how the media reported them, and the media dilemmas that protesters faced.

As Scalmer notes early in the book, many forms of dissent can be thought of as 'political gimmicks' or 'theatrical performances' aimed at reaching out to mass audiences, and that one of the key dilemmas is that if such performances are too 'disruptive' or 'chal-

lenging' they risk alienating people, but that if they are too routine or inoffensive they will not be publicised at all. This dilemma is highlighted throughout much of the book and Scalmer does justice to the historical and social contexts that influence how the media portray protests. For example, a simple vigil or peaceful demonstration or 'teach-in' that in the early 1960s received considerable publicity would fail to receive publicity in later years as the media came to treat such forms of dissent as more routine. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, there seemed continual pressure to escalate the confrontational or innovative aspects of actions and demonstrations to gain any publicity at all – as Scalmer confirms through detailed content analysis of newspaper accounts of the time.

Scalmer also offers a useful way of theorising the relations between collective protest action and the media that will help both activists and media studies students gain a more systematic understanding of key aspects of using and relating to the media. One of these processes, *translation*, refers to the way in which activists in one country or field of action reinterpret or adapt successful forms of action used in other countries or types of movement. The Moratoriums of 1970–71, for example, were inspired by a similar form of protest in America but at the same time adapted this form in unique ways to the Australian context.

Another key process that Scalmer identifies is *staging*, the performance aspect of dissent. He distinguishes broadly between three 'repertoires' of collective performance: *industrial action*, such as strikes, pickets, and stopworks; *representational* performances, including conventions, petitions, and deputations, designed to convey how protest movements 'stand for' or 'represent' larger groups; and *staging repertoire*, such as demonstrations, sit-ins, and marches, designed to make public statements or claims about what governments or society ought to be doing.

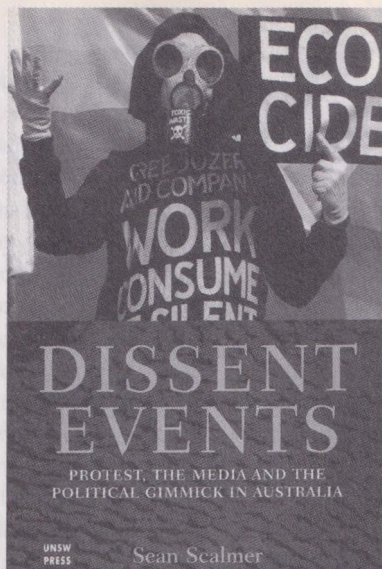
A third process is that of *diffusion*, conceived of as the way in which successful or effective forms of action help catalyse new social struggles or contexts. One of Scalmer's notable achievements in the book is to pinpoint the exact historical moments when new social or political groups emerge out of existing movements and make the new forms of protest their own. Examples that he documents include the role of Save Our Sons in highlighting a new kind of public performance by women in the mid-1960s, and the

role of Women's Liberation groups and Aboriginal groups in making their voices heard in the context of antiwar and Moratorium demonstrations during the early 1970s.

Two final processes that Scalmer focuses on include the role of theory and theorisation in relation to how political events are interpreted and constructed, using the journal *Arena's* theorising of 1960s and 1970s movements as a case study; and the role of direct attempts to influence or become involved in media structures, policy and organisations, such as direct criticism of the media for biased or inadequate reporting, or the use of alternative forms of media, including most recently the Internet. In the latter case, Scalmer points to the experience of recent anti-globalisation protests in which Melbourne s11 activists at the World Economic Forum conference in 2000 contested the mainstream media portrayals of the protests through the use of their own video and photographic coverage and the use of their s11 web-site.

Scalmer's carefully researched study represents a major advance on previous studies focusing on the media and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Gerster and Bassett's *Seizures of Youth* (1991) which cynically misinterpreted protesters' reliance on the media and political gimmicks as a kind of motivation in itself – social movements as fashion statements – rather than driven by the life and death moral issues of the Vietnam war, genocide and oppression.

Impressive and insightful as it obviously is, Scalmer's book is not without flaws. The empirical basis for the study is very Sydney-centric, with no corresponding analysis of the Melbourne *Age* to balance that carried out of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Given the size and frequency of protest action in Melbourne, which matched or exceeded that of Sydney, an intensive study of the Melbourne media would undoubtedly have strengthened and enhanced the book's arguments. It might also have avoided some errors such as the claim on p.13 (based on Sydney informants) that there was no "rapid translation" of British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament protests in Australia during the early 1960s and that "there were to be no colourful marches or sustained campaigns of civil disobedience on the model of the Brit-



ish peace movement". I personally recall not only being greatly inspired by the British CND movement and Bertrand Russell's Committee of 100 civil disobedience group but also going on two-day thirty-kilometre Frankston to Melbourne Hiroshima Day marches in every year from 1960 to 1964, and being actively involved in the Victorian CND committee, which in turn was the precursor to the Victorian Vietnam Coordinating Committee that organised the first demonstrations against the Vietnam War in Melbourne.

Methodologically, it also shares the same fault as Gerster and Bassett's previous book in that it relies principally on existing written and media sources rather than complementing these sources with direct interviewing of participants and seeking to access non-published oral history sources (such as the transcripts held by the National War Museum in Canberra and other collections in university libraries). While this may have been related to time constraints associated with the study, it is nevertheless a pity, because it would have been useful to explore more fully how activists at the time experienced and negotiated the media dilemmas they confronted.

Another flaw was that the study concentrated primarily on the epiphenomena of protest rather than taking sufficient account of deeper guiding strategies and approaches that influenced how activists related to the media. Scalmer occasionally seems to subsume all kinds of civil disobedience under the generic label of disruption and infer that such disruption must generally "accept the costs of negative media coverage". However, some approaches, such as the Gandhian non-violent direct-action strategy, explicitly seek to find modes of direct action and civil disobedience that are likely to be more sympathetically covered by the media because they involve no threat of injury or violence against people and allow the protesters to gain the higher moral ground. Certainly such an approach was very much in the mind of many of us who were actively involved in a variety of types of civil disobedience, including going to gaol for non-compliance with conscription laws, sit-ins at induction centres, and establishing a draft resistance 'underground'.

Despite these flaws, Scalmer's book represents an innovative contribution to understanding the dynamics and tensions between protest action and media representations, and will be an invaluable resource for both media studies students and new generations of activists seeking to develop effective media strategies and campaigns.

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Rearranging Gender

Joy Damousi

R.W. Connell: *Gender* (Polity, \$46.15).

R.W. CONNELL BEGINS this book by suggesting that we need "to travel – both intellectually and culturally" in order to grasp the full scope and breadth of a topic such as 'gender'. He takes us through a journey which is exhilarating, engaging, challenging and sometimes playful. Whatever the approach, there are always surprises. This is no mean feat, given this work is a 'short introduction', a genre in academic writing which usually demands no more than drawing on existing literature to map a field of scholarly inquiry. *Gender* is much more than this. Although the analyses are based on a vast array of published material, it is an exemplary work for its interdisciplinarity, and for the creative ways in which Connell theorises and applies gendered categories to a complex range of cultural practices.

Over the past twenty years or so, the field of gender studies has expanded in ways which were inconceivable to feminist activists who first debated the theoretical dimensions of gender and pondered the various ways in which it could extend the parameters of scholarship. Since then, gender has made a significant impact in most fields of intellectual inquiry within the social sciences and the humanities. Questions relating to masculinity and femininity, sexuality, the body, the psychology of difference and gender identity, have been formative in shaping our current cultural and social understandings framed by these concepts. Connell's own research has been pivotal in developing and extending the parameters of gender into various fields which include education, masculinity, and theories of difference and power.

The book is structured around specific examples, analysed to capture some of the complexity and interconnectedness of how gender 'works'. Connell adopts 'an integrated approach', incorporating links and connections across conventional disciplinary boundaries such as education, sociology, cultural studies, psychology and history. Few scholars achieve this sort of interdisciplinarity, although they aspire to it. Connell's integration of the multi-layered approach offers exciting possibilities in how gender informs, and is informed by the various dimensions of cultural life.

We are taken through the "arrangements of the gender order" in a contemporary society via housework, childcare, gender ambiguities, language and movements for social change. In his analysis of schooling, mining, HIV/AIDS, memory and war, Connell insists on the fluidity of gender, through an exploration of the relationships, boundaries, practices, identities and images which emerge to construct gendered identities and structures. Scholarship on the body has been a crucial part of these understandings. The complexity of issues surrounding the body are crystallised in Connell's discussion on bodies and differences. He examines a range of topics in this area – the policing of bodies, the discourse and sociology of the body, both the material and discursive construction of the body, and bodies as objects and subjects of social practice.

The personal and how it relates to the political is central to all this, as understandings of power relationships frame the discussion of emotional relations. Post-structuralist theories inform these approaches and the importance placed on symbolic relations is drawn out and analysed. Gender and personal life, including themes of how gender is acquired through ethnicity, sexuality, multiple patterns of masculinity and femininity, and various patterns of socialisation are highlighted. Historical change is also considered within these frameworks, as gender is foregrounded as a crucial historical category of analysis.

A key link Connell makes is the relationship between gender and globalisation, governments and global society. In contextualising issues of personal relations, identities, motherhood and family life with large-scale industries, corporate management and the state, he charts the ways these entities shape and are shaped by gender relations. In exploring the relationship to imperial conquest, neo-colonialism, trade and communication, and multinational corporations,

Connell draws together disparate elements which are invariably ignored in analyses of the international nature of the gender order. Gender arrangements, he argues, have been redefined by patterns of slavery, indentured labour, migration and resettlement. Arms and masculine violence are linked. Traditional and multinational corporations have a strong division of labour, and are defined by a masculine culture. Global markets are specifically gender structured. In other areas outside the world economy, such as politics, the disproportionate numbers of men and women continue to characterise the gender profile of high office.

The intellectual history of feminism is an important aspect of any consideration of gender. An understanding of such movements is a key to exploring the emergence of such ideas, how these are contested, and the shape they have taken over time. Connell has characterised the past twenty years of the history of gender as the “age of diversity”, and charts the developments that have taken feminists there. The final chapter concludes on a powerful personal note, which forcefully illustrates the way in which unlike other political forms, gender politics operates in a very intimate, personal way. The feminist slogan – the personal is political – is as pertinent as ever.

This summary of the category of gender captures the breath of gender as a concept, and is written with considerable insight, wisdom, clarity and erudition. While any such study must inevitably have its gaps, there are a few areas which could have been integrated into the frameworks discussed here. These include issues of religion, the environment, and technology. The latter is perhaps the most pertinent, as the cyber-revolution has redefined gender representation and identities for another generation and a different audience of feminists. These technological shifts have reconfigured gender politics in the twenty-first century and present a challenge to gender critiques, one which feminists have yet to fully embrace. This issue is perhaps the subject of another volume.

Connell’s rigorous examination of gender takes us through an enriching and enlightening intellectual journey.

Joy Damousi is Associate Professor in the history department at the University of Melbourne. She recently published Living With the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia (Cambridge 2001).

Good com, bad com

Humphrey McQueen

L.J. Louis: *Menzies’ Cold War, a reinterpretation* (Red Rag Publications, \$20).

Lefty Freeman: *One Man’s Fight Against ASIO* (RMIT University, \$25).

Peter Love & Paul Strangio (eds): *Arguing the Cold War* (Red Rag Publications, \$20).

BY 1938, THE ÉMIGRÉ GERMAN novelist Thomas Mann had perceived that Nazism and fascism were “expedients against the threat of social revolution everywhere . . . for which the respectable world everywhere . . . has a secret weakness”. The appeasers knew which side they were on in that global class war. The armed conflicts that had begun in Spain and China did not surrender their character as imperialist rivalries upon the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. The USA continued to wage economic war against both its Japanese competitor and its British ally, as it had done during and after the Great War. The tussle for dominance within the United Nations erupted as soon as the Axis powers surrendered. The conflict between the Soviet bloc and the US-dominated force was another part of this grab for markets.

LES LOUIS HAS SHIFTED the ground beneath Cold War scholarship by linking military espionage matters to the struggle between wage-labour and capital. From this perspective, the attacks on communist-led unions appear as economic necessity more than red-baiting. The class struggle would have proceeded inside Australia even if the Cold War had not occurred. When Labor and then the Coalition used the military in the mines and on the docks they were involved in the class struggle as a battle for productivity against the technological backwardness of both sectors.

In the late 1940s, much of the Australian economy was still managed under the wartime extension of central power. The big exception was the direction of labour, although New Australians were supposed to work wherever they were told for two years. When the Menzies government lifted price controls and ran into the Korean War boom, the gap widened between the need to invest in capital goods and the demand for consumer items. On top of this scissors crisis came pressure to increase military outlays.

With inflation moving towards 18 per cent in the

April-June quarter of 1951, Menzies declared that Australia “did not have a day more than three years in which to get ready” for a new world conflict. Having just had his Communist Party Dissolution Bill declared unconstitutional, Menzies was staking out the grounds for arguments before the High Court to extend the powers of the Commonwealth to preparations for war, and not just for its conduct or aftermath.

The Menzies Government needed a US umbrella (ANZUS) if it were to win an election after signing the Peace Treaty with Japan and committing to the Middle East. Louis’ Australian case makes sense in the context of the triangular strategy of reviving Europe and Japan by giving them access to their old colonies. The British needed Malaya for tin and rubber to provide dollar exchanges.

Louis underlines the nuclear option as the new priority that allowed total defence outlays to stagnate around £200 million through the 1950s, after the death of Stalin and ceasefires in Korea and Indo-China had lowered the temperature.

Now that Louis has pointed the way, it behoves diplomatic historians to bone up on political economy in the manner of the Kolkos, but with even more attention to the labour process.

THE WORKING DAY of Leftheris Eleftheratos (Lefty Freeman) at the GM-H Pagewood plant in the 1950s deserved more space in his memoir. Freeman came to Sydney in the late 1940s but was not allowed to return when he went back to Greece in the mid-1950s. He complains that he was treated as a communist when he wasn’t one. Typical of Hellenic revanchists, Freeman spends much of his book proving that Cyprus has always been Greek. The national question takes precedence over the class question, even though, as he notes, the armed rebels in Cyprus under Grivas were in cahoots with the homeland Greeks who had collaborated with the British in 1945–48 and with the Colonels who overthrew a creaky democracy in 1967. Less than a quarter of Freeman’s book adds to the Cold War story in Australia. Yet it is worth being reminded that Cyprus was one of the foci of the Cold War for control of the Mediterranean, another strand of decolonisation. The retreat of Britain left room for the US to swivel between Athens and Ankara, according to which was the more fascist at the time. Henry Kissinger connived in the Junta’s toppling of the democratically elected President Makarios in 1974, which further diminishes Greece’s claim to be the fount of democracy.

CONFERENCE PAPERS gauge the ideological winds. The Love and Strangio collection presents somewhat more than the conventional left-wing wisdom about the Cold War years in Australia, but nonetheless reveals how far most writers have to go to catch up with Louis.

Peter Love opens with as succinct an overview as it is possible to construct. Errors of detail and emphasis are worth correcting to sharpen our understanding of the class factors at play. The Coalition was not the “only unequivocal victor in Australia’s Cold War” since the US military and corporations did far better out of it. Moreover, it is sad to see someone on the left accepting US propaganda about the Marshall Plan as a charitable act, and one which Stalin rejected. In fact, the Plan had been framed so that the Soviets could not accept it, its aim being to revive the US economy.

Love is also amiss to claim that von Hayek’s allegation that welfarism must lead to totalitarianism was not widely discussed here by 1946. Dymocks had published an edition of *The Road to Serfdom* in 1945, with a reprint the next year. By October 1945, local trade journals were quoting praise for Hayek from the *Reader’s Digest*. More significantly, Australia had its home-grown von Hayeks in Professor F.A. Bland’s outpourings, John Anderson’s 1943 essay on ‘The Servile State’, and the Institute of Public Affairs, founded late in 1942. The ideological front of the class war was well underway in Australia before Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech. The preemptive strike against planning was part of the war for position on the ideological front, protecting capital from domestic constraints, not threats from abroad. At the start of the Cold War, the struggle was to restore capitalism to favour after it had delivered two world wars, a depression and fascism.

The Communist Party Dissolution Bill and subsequent referendum have none of the aura the Petrov Commission still attracts yet it generates as many errors. Contrary to Love, Evatt’s arguments to the High Court over the Act ‘persuaded’ none of its members who had to put aside their animus towards their erstwhile brother in order to uphold their legal principles. A majority of electors voted ‘No’ at the subsequent referendum because of the economic anger that Evatt and Victorian Liberal premier Tom Holloway inflamed. Jenny Hocking’s piece on the 1951 Referendum misses both these points and fails to grasp that, as much as Dixon J. wanted to ban the Communist Party, he was not prepared to abolish

Federalism, or the High Court, which he believed the government was asking the Bench to do. To dismiss such objections as 'technicalities' fails to grasp the nature of judicial logic. Those technicalities may prove useful against the latest state terrorism.

Hocking also needs to read Audrey Johnston's 1986 life of Tasmanian Senator Bill Morrow, *Fly a Rebel Flag*, if she thinks that Menzies was being other than factual when he remarked how easy it would be to 'declare' at least one Labor senator. Menzies' mention that a member of the House of Representatives would escape by the skin of his teeth was a parliamentary riposte to Eddie Ward who had just interjected. Evatt's role in the court case or referendum did not ensure "his and the Australian Labor Party's electoral defeat for years to come". On the contrary, Evatt went from strength to strength until he won a majority of the votes, but not of the seats, in 1954.

The ex-coms, Amirah Inglis and Bernie Taft, rake over ploughed fields whereas the Groupers, John Cotter and Rick Brown, open up the story. A volume of their colleagues' memoirs would be more welcome than another moan from the Left. The splits in Santamaria's organisations matched those in their communist adversary. What would have happened had the Movement been led by Stan Keon and not by Bob Santamaria? Was Keon the greatest Labor prime minister Australia never had? Bruce Duncan seeks to crack the Santamaria Conundrum but does not see that he was a Falangist more than a fascist, whose enemies were the Reformation, the Enlightenment and Modernism, of which communism was but a late manifestation. His attacks on global finance in the 1990s were part of that mentality.

Overland editor Ian Syson ends the collection with the wish that the Cold War become a popular topic, observing that it is important to keep the *Quadrant* crew, from Peter Coleman to Robert Manne, in their ideological place. Surely it would be better to go back to Les Louis's concern for the class war in every decade as a basis for waging it today?

In preparing for those battles, it is worth noting that none of these leftist authors accepts the Marxist-Leninist stance that the state is the instrument of class repression. Rather, they seem upset that the government did not act as umpire. From this condition, two conclusions follow. First, many of the most radical Australians have absorbed a bourgeois liberal view of the state. Secondly, if this acceptance is indicative of the outlook of the Australian working class, then any notion of the state as class violence raised to an

obligatory norm is enshrined as a truism with scant relevance to political activism. To analyse why this pluralist view has triumphed means exploring the effects of industrial arbitration, parliamentary cretinism and welfare systems in giving the workers' representatives a bureaucratic rent.

Similarly, the Left's acceptance of the Venona transcripts – despite Phillip Deery's warnings – has installed a line between those bad communists who spied for the Soviet Union and the good ones who worked for social reforms. Again, this division rejects Marxist-Leninist principles where loyalty is owed to the international working class, not to the capitalist state under which one happens to be born. To rephrase a familiar remark, if asked to betray either one's country or one's class, the revolutionaries of the 1920s had hoped for the courage to subvert the rulers of their nation-market-state. That this morality later served ignoble ends does not make it any less honourable. Above all, the great betrayal was not of bourgeois patriotism in the 1930s and 1940s, but of proletarian solidarity when Labor leaders sabotaged the Second International's pledge for a general strike to prevent war in 1914.

Humphrey McQueen is a historian working from Canberra.

Earth, ground, soil & bare bones

Cath Kenneally

Bruce Pascoe: *Earth* (Magabala Books, \$18.65).

Tim Winton: *Dirt Music* (Picador, \$46).

BRUCE PASCOE AND Tim Winton are of one mind in wanting to get down to basics in their most recent books: the earth, the ground, the soil, the bare bones. Winton has a go at it by way of a sprawling novel about one man's attempted escape from present-day confusion back to the bosom of the land; Bruce Pascoe tries to sing this country's past via a hymn of many voices.

Pascoe's mode of telling his story is more difficult to come to terms with, a playwright's rather than a novelist's approach, being a whole book made of fragments of dialogue between different characters, some interior monologue and a few letters. As with a play, we deduce everything about period and circumstances of this story from what the speakers say.

It's clear early on that some of the speakers are Wathaurong people, some white, that the setting is Geelong, around the Barwon River and the time between the late nineteenth century and the present (one of the voices being that of Judge Redmond Barry who sentenced Ned Kelly). When some of the characters also turn out to be spirits, and one the earth itself, a postmodern/postcolonial reader may get twitchy (though s/he finds him/herself roundly castigated for such affectations when Da [earth] gets to speak). But if s/he reads to the end of *Earth*, these reservations may dissolve.

Frank and Claudie are salt-of-the-earth battlers, making a life for themselves in a white township, although most of the whites are ambivalent towards Frank, touched by the tar as he is. Claudie is a midwife, Frank a fencer, and they are bringing up their grandson, Alfie, whose mother is attempting to make a life in Melbourne. Alfie regularly importunes his reluctant Grandpa to tell him about their blackfella connections. His pious Christian grandmother fears that opening that can of worms will destroy her dreams of a quiet, comfortable family life. Eventually, the luxury of choice on this score is denied them, as events conspire to bring to a head local white hostility to the remnants of the local Aboriginal community.

On the whole, Pascoe sustains most of the voices heartily and well. There's a disarming, boots-and-all gusto about his approach. The book is unapologetically didactic, the people two-dimensional, incarnating certain vices and virtues in the manner of characters in a morality tale. Da's voice, so sharp you'd cut yourself on it, is irresistible, tearing strips off us Japanese-water-garden-tending wankers who can't see what's important. The Aboriginal spirits who watch the unfolding of events, lamenting the sorry tale while insisting on looking to the future, are impersonated with panache and intense feeling. Good guys and villains among the whites mostly play their appointed roles convincingly.

Earth is a Brechtian project; if I didn't shed my discomfort with it, I came to admire its brashness and respect both its engagement and its author's credentials.

When I open *Dirt Music* at random, I find a passage surprisingly close to some of the dialogue in *Earth*.

Lu? she murmurs.
Hm?
I saw God today.
Fair dinkum?

Was him orright.

How'd he seem?

Eh?

Er, what'd he look like?

A dot. A dot in a circle, sort of. When I close me eye and poke it with me thumb he floats across the sky.

Both Winton's and Pascoe's leading male characters speak an unapologetic Strine. It's a mark of their blokey authenticity, although it dates easily and can sometimes sound forced.

I always have to battle a resistance to the tough-guy, tight-lipped narrative in a Winton novel. Again, at random: "In the wreckyard behind his roadhouse a bear-like man in a pair of greasy overalls had a last toke on his wizened reefer and shifted his weight off the hood of the Valiant which some dick had recently driven off the end of the jetty." It always seems over the top at first, almost parodic. But it doesn't take long before you lie back and enjoy it, particularly as it lends itself to plenty of laconic jokes. "Up in the bridge it was all Roy Orbison and bacon farts." And an admirable conciseness: "He didn't want them to follow the standard White Point trajectory which meant bumping out of school at fifteen to end up in seaboots or prison greens."

And this time half the novel is in a woman's voice: Georgie Jutland, uncomfortably domiciled with Jim Buckridge, king-fisher of White Point. Trying to find an emotional hook on which to hang her life, Georgie meets 'shamateur' fisherman Luther Fox, sole survivor of a tragedy that removed the rest of his family at a stroke, a man after her own heart.

In true Winton-bloke style, Lu Fox finds it hard to express himself. "So much that he nearly, almost said to Georgie Jutland. He stands there in the last light divided by relief and regret." Haunted and angry, he's rushing headlong towards a showdown with the universe. He finds it, partly by accident, partly by a concatenation of fateful events. Its name is Coronation Gulf. The middle of the book takes Luther to the Far North, Georgie to her own attempted breakout. The two collide again at the end of the book, Georgie the stronger now.

So, it's a romance, and it's a quest. And it's good; all the protagonists and the minor players vividly realised (especially Beaver, local mechanic at White Point). The small coastal community is drawn from close observation, and its fears, cruelties, bigotry and claustrophobia rear off the page. But what makes

Dirt Music great is its romance with the landscape: the sea and the earth, coast and desert, mainland and islands. This is Winton's great love, and inspires his best writing, at dozens of indrawn-breath moments through this book.

Lu Fox's Hemingwayesque bid for heroic solitude at the tip of the known world reveals a truth: communion with the land is a cleansing source of wisdom, but communion with fellow humans is its necessary complement. In *Dirt Music*, Tim Winton picks up many myths about this wide brown land like so many conch shells, holds them to his ear and reports on their validity. In a brief, astonishing dream sequence towards the end, all the facets of human life and its groundedness in place that fascinate him come together:

Georgie squatted alongside him to see the black steel pipe beneath the surface with its rash of valves and taps . . . There were little jets of every odour: your mother, the smell of the back of your arm, food, shit, decay, soap . . . And then he looked up, took a peck of dirt, spat on it and rolled it into a yellow pellet. He pressed it gently into her ear and smiled. It sang. Like the inside of a shell. . . Like a bee in her ear.

Cath Kenneally produces and presents *Writers' Radio* (Adelaide). Her novel, *Room Temperature* (Wakefield Press), was published in 2001 and she won the John Bray National Poetry Award at this year's Adelaide Festival for 'Around Here'.

Beyond Borders

Jude McCulloch

Anthony Burke: *In Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety* (Pluto Press, \$39.95).

ANTHONY BURKE'S BOOK is timely. Howard's victory in a 'Khaki election', built substantially on the back of fear of refugees, demonstrates the continued potency of Australia's 'invasion anxiety'. The vilification of refugees as potential terrorists and child abusers, the use of the navy and the army's crack commando squad the SAS to repel them, and the indefinite incarceration in deliberately cruel conditions of those 'fortunate' enough to make it to Australian shores, gives substance to Burke's central observation that security – conceived prima-

rily in terms of military or coercive strength – "implies the insecurity and suffering of the Other". The epilogue 'Sink the Tampa', completes the book's journey with "a sad historical double-take" that asks "are we now so far from the declaration of Prime Minister Joseph Cook, in 1913 as the first Australian naval vessels arrived from Britain's shipyards, 'that this fleet will defend White Australia from less advanced but aggressive nations all around us with lower standards?'"

As corporations and multi-lateral agencies accrete and use power over trade and trade-related matters, nation states are gradually surrendering many of their traditional tasks. In this context security is increasingly becoming the principal focus of state activity: welfare states are fast transforming into warfare states. States no longer willing or able to respond to demands for social justice are quick to respond to, exacerbate and even create the fears that underlie the demands for security in its most repressive and coercive forms. With growing social and economic inequalities, ceremonies and rituals that confirm 'national identity' serve as increasingly important instruments of political integration. Because national identity and sovereignty are fundamentally based on exclusion, these necessarily imply or articulate fear and rejection of those 'not us'.

Burke argues, building on Foucault's work on *Governmentality*, that security is a "political technology of the body, the economy and the state simultaneously". He interrogates the concept of security and traces its "deployment and operation through Australia's political history – using a method which seeks to bring rhetorics of national identity and economic, defence and foreign policy into an analytical whole". In chapters that traverse colonisation, federation, 'the Anzac tradition', the Second World War, the Cold War, Vietnam, the years 1969 and 1995 – described as 'Between Justice and Uncertainty' – and 'Australia's Asian Crisis' from 1996 to 2001, he describes security's promise and the techniques that "have made our history and continue to circumscribe our possibilities". Burke illustrates the way the pursuit of security, whether driven by the attitude to Indigenous people, anxiety about "the countless millions of inferior members of the human family who are within easy sail of these shores", or fear of the Red Menace, is "central to the construction of powerful images of national identity and otherness, and central to their use in bitter political conflicts which have too often resolved in violent and anti-democratic ways".

How then do we escape what Burke refers to as this “terrible poisonous repetition”? The challenge of the new millennium, and one on which our lives and the lives of our children literally depend, is to imagine ourselves in the Other. As Baldwin wrote in *Fifth Avenue Uptown*, “It is a terrible and inexorable law, that one cannot deny the humanity of another without diminishing one’s own; in the face of one’s victim, one sees oneself”. This ‘law’ operates not just at the level of individual psychology but also in the realm of the material world. When our own violence is projected through paranoid fantasy onto the body of the Other we imperil ourselves. The ‘war on terrorism’, given meaning and operationalised through the binary of ‘good against evil’ – ‘with us or with the terrorists’ – provides a powerful illustration. The war, while inflicting terror and death on civilians and combatants alike, is likely to provoke terrorism of exactly the type it purports to counter. In the end the terrorism of non-state actors and state security may form a single deadly system that justifies and legitimates each other through an escalating cycle of attack and counterattack. When security is a zero sum game, ‘us against them’, we all lose.

There is, as Burke concludes, no military, coercive or repressive solution compatible with human security. Human security coexists most happily and abundantly in the company of justice, not fear and force. If the postscript to security is to be justice, as it must be, we must first understand our history. As each page of Burke’s book attests, rule by war, theft and raw violence formed and continue to form the fundamental categories of our polity – sovereignty, territory and national *being*. In refusing security that relies on the insecurity and suffering of Others and choosing instead the path to justice we must, as Burke argues, “refuse what we are in a simultaneous act of justice for the Other – an act of justice in which the Other might finally speak with its own voice and on its own terms, in which it is neither made an enemy or reduced to the Same . . . It may be that a genuinely *just* response demands that we risk the basic categories of our being – to believe that beyond the taken-for-granted categories of our world there is a better world to be thought. . . We have only ourselves to lose, and Others to find”. Burke’s scholarly, engaging and passionate book is beyond important, it is vital. Its message is one upon which the very possibility of our future now rests.

Jude McCulloch lectures in Police Studies at Deakin University. She is the author of *Blue Army: Paramilitary Policing in Australia* (MUP).

Nuns or Mothers?

Patricia Poppenbeek

Sallie Muirden: *We too shall be mothers* (HarperCollins, \$19.95).

READING *We too shall be mothers* is like slipping into a warm bath, picking up handfuls of jewels, and watching them dissolve into multicoloured streaks as you lie back in the water. Like Michelle de Kretser’s *The Rose Grower*, Sallie Muirden’s book uses the French Revolution as a backdrop for her romance about a young nun forced out of her convent by the edicts of the Revolutionary government. We accompany the possibly symbolically named Marie-France as she journeys towards motherhood – and perhaps wifhood. If Muirden is lucky, the Catholic Church will be annoyed: in combination with the cover showing a nun lifting her wimple to display her breasts, this could make it a best-seller.

Exciting practices certainly occur in Marie-France’s convent. “I’m pregnant for you,” one nun tells our heroine; and they practise laying out the dead on each other. Marie-France is rubbed “all over with pieces of fresh lemon as if I was a fish about to be baked in a shallow dish.” Is she living in some sort of Sapphic dream world? Or is she mad? In the convent, she goes around obsessively trying keys in locks; outside, she develops a tremor. She is unquestionably sad and needy. The appeal for her of the lemon basting is that at least she “was being touched. I was being cared for in the only way I could imagine possible.”

Despite the grotesque religious practices, the suggestive cover, and Marie-France saying that it is a serious matter to be deprived of your vocation, this is not a book about God or Church or the horrors of the French Revolution. Marie-France enters the convent in search of the “amber warmth” she had known with Giselle, her best friend, and her friend’s family; and because she is wounded by Giselle’s death in childbirth. The Terror impels her towards maturity. Otherwise it impacts either comparatively lightly (the burial of a priest hanged by republicans is essentially the worst that happens to Marie-France); or it has bizarre results (so many women and men dress as pregnant women to avoid, respectively, rape and arrest that a fashion sets in for pregnancy wear, and nuns become ballerinas). This is not a book about historical cruelties or psychological pathologies. In a fantastical

world where patients float to health, an ex-nun aided by kindly townspeople builds a rope church over the Avignon, and the whole of Vienna sings opera, Marie-France is sad not mad, and we can simply enjoy her fey journey towards independence.

Like Muirden's first novel, *Revelations of a Spanish Infanta*, this book is about the struggle to be a woman, to overcome the fear of death and birth, and is drenched in the paradoxical and mystical element of water. Music, however, replaces painting as a theme, which may be one reason why it is more slippery than the first one. It is somewhat in the mode of magical realism, but without the grimness. Muirden describes it as "a fairytale" and like all fairytales it is fundamentally about metamorphosis.

Patricia Poppenbeek has an MA in Literature, is a freelance writer and teaches in the Diploma of Communication and Media at RMIT University.

Mars Bars and Ecstasy

Lucy Sussex

Kerryn Higgs: *All That False Instruction* (Spinifex, \$24.95).

Mireille Juchau: *Machines for Feeling* (UQP, \$19.95).

Cath Keneally: *Room Temperature* (Wakefield, \$19.95).

Gina Mercer: *Parachute Silk* (Spinifex, \$24.95).

Carolyn van Langenberg: *Fish Lips* (Indra, \$22.95).

Amy Witting: *After Cynthia* (Penguin, \$22).

... novels too numerous to mention (at least 20,000 of them fresh new voices) ... *The Corrs* (in twelve languages), *How to be a Millionaire and Remain a Nice Person*, *How to be a Millionaire by Being a Complete Bastard*, *the Legacy of the Biro* ... more novels, most of them written by pretty teenagers who've lived on *Ecstasy* and *Mars Bars* and are thus highly promotable ...

THE ABOVE is ex-publisher Nick Webb's view of the Frankfurt Book Fair. Only a fraction of his not-entirely-facetious list is quoted (I refer the reader to p.2 of John Man's *The Gutenberg Revolution* for the full horrors), yet it is noteworthy that the novels are described as being 'too numerous to mention'. It could indicate the form is healthy, with 20,000 new voices, or else that the market is severely overglutted. Does the world really need

numerous novels, 20,000 of them by new writers? Have trees died in vain for these books?

None of the writers in the batch of novels under review, a grab-bag from the *overland* editor's groaning in-tray, is a teenager existing on Mars Bars or Ecstasy (and I would suggest such a diet would hardly be conducive to creativity, let alone good prose). Rather, they are a group of Australian women, with one author born during the First World War, the rest baby-boomers and even younger. Only one writer approaches the canonical, the late and much lamented Amy Witting, although another is a very serious contender. Only one author (again Witting) is published by a multinational (Penguin), the rest by smaller presses ranging from UQP to Spinifex.

In order of seniority, and also fame, Witting shall be considered first. Whatever the merits of this book, it deserves note as being produced by an author almost blind, and dying of cancer. It is perhaps a compliment to say that neither affliction could be deduced from *After Cynthia*, although the book has something of an elegiac tone. The setting is an exclusive girls' school, the characters teachers. A student is suicidal, the incident promoting memories of a similar crisis, many decades past. The novel is hardly *Blackboard Jungle* or *Yizo Yizo*, but neither is it cosy: "I know one thing, suicides aren't nice people", notes a character. The focus is on the extreme practicality, even pragmatism, of the teacher's world, where small good deeds count for much. There is also romance, though of the *One Foot in the Grave* variety, and even when the lovers are young it seems autumnal. The novel ultimately is not up to the standard of Witting's superb *I for Isobel*, but very little in Australian literature is. *After Cynthia* comprises a quiet, rewarding coda to a distinguished writing career.

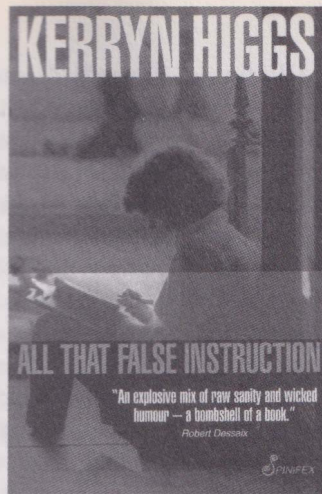
Kerryn Higgs' *All that False Instruction* is in contrast a first novel, published over twenty-five years ago. Due to its sexual content and a fear of litigation, it was published under a pseudonym, and promptly fell into outer literary darkness. However, the work gained a considerable reputation via word of mouth, not least in its being the first lesbian novel in Australia. As a consequence, *False Instruction* has now been reprinted, appearing for the first time in its original form, and acknowledged by Higgs. Bildingsroman with gay content is one way to describe this novel, another variant on the theme of bright achiever as square peg in the round hole of Australian parochial society. But it is utterly clear-eyed and unflinching on the subject of gender wars, being particularly acute

on the genius of older oz male and his “automatic assumption of control and authority”. The novel also presents a superb microcosm of the change that occurred in Australia in the 1960s–70s, charting the progression from ‘Ladies don’t move’ (a chapter title) to the sexual revolution and second-wave feminism. As a literary performance, it is assured, not putting a foot wrong – an extraordinary achievement for a first novelist. In a nutshell, *False Instruction* is the best in the bunch, and one of the best Australian novels I have ever read.

Four novels remain to be reviewed, which beside *False Instruction* are somewhat outclassed (as are, arguably, the writers whose quotes promote Higgs’ book). The rave is thus over, though these four also have considerable merits. They have little in common though, being widely different in form, language and subject matter. None are less than competent, which is not to damn with faint praise, as competence is not necessarily guaranteed in recent Australian novels. Three of the writers have published books previously, two of them being poets, and the fourth is a Vogel shortlistee (after Helen Darville, no guarantee of quality).

Parachute Silk is, like *False Instruction*, a Spinifex publication, and has similar lesbian and feminist subject matter. Unusually, it is an epistolary novel, something that in this era of e-mail may represent a dying species. Mercer is a poet, and her poems interpose between the letters and the story they tell. Finn and Molly are long-standing friends, living long distances apart. Their relationship is sustained by letters, but also by an unspoken need for the confessional. Molly wants to know why Finn is not currently lesbian, which leads Finn to muse over her life and loves. She tries to keep one important secret to herself, but it emerges anyway. *Silk* is warm, gossipy, and intimate, a mirror on contemporary women’s lives. Some might term it self-indulgent, if good chocolate after a long, busy day is self-indulgence rather than a necessity.

Machines for Feeling seems a less spontaneous, more carefully wrought novel, which was first commended by the Vogel judges, then rewritten and shortlisted for the award. Its subject matter is the damaged young, its central characters three teenagers who meet at a Home for Children. Dog Boy has autism, and the lovers Rien and Mark, while more



‘normal’, still are focused more on their busy inner lives than the outer world. The language of this novel is its major strength, Juchau writing with great clarity to illuminate bleak landscapes. A poetic novel about the autistic could misfire badly, and Juchau avoids this trap. Yet the grunge of institutional teenage life seems slightly at odds with the coolness and elegance of the style.

Room Temperature is written with a similarly striking sense of language, author Kenneally having published two volumes of poetry. It tells

the story of an Adelaide Catholic upbringing: Carmel is born, convent-educated, lives a very un-Catholic life. The narrative concentrates on the domestic, avoiding linearity by swapping timezones several times a chapter. The whole resembles Carmel’s comment that a life isn’t a story, rather a series of ‘jostling scenes’ forever being replayed in the memory. That such jostling is a deliberate artistic choice is further indicated by the quotation opening the novel. It comes from Alice Munro’s ‘Differently’, about a creative writing student criticised for a story with too much in it. Her next story, much more sparse and described as ‘fake’, is handed in with an appendix of all the things left out. The choice of epigraph reads like a defence of *Room Temperature*, which does indeed read like an appendix at times. It is a delight to read, but ultimately too busy.

Fish Lips is, as the title indicates, something quite different. All of the novels so far in the batch have been confined to Australia, with occasional excursions overseas, and all set firmly in the realist mode. *Fish Lips*, in contrast, moves between the 1940s and the 1980s, and is largely set in Malaysia. Furthermore it ventures into magic realism at times. The novel tells the story of modern, and not-so-modern lovers, an Australian historian and her boyfriend paralleled by English Rose and Li-Tsieng, wartime forbidden sweethearts. The past mingles with the present, as skyscrapers overshadow the hovels of Penang, and Straits fishermen see a lipless face in the water. Langenberg is not afraid of the big picture, nor of sending ghosts walking down a modern street. She is not yet as stylish in her language as Kenneally or Juchau, but she does take more risks, and manages her ambitious narrative with justified confidence.

So, to sum up: did trees die in vain for these books?

In the case of Higgs, certainly not, and the Witting is an accomplished runner-up. The others are to various degrees less assured, and likely to be more successful with later novels. At this point in time, the stylists are Kenneally and Juchau, but the creative writing race is not always won by those who master language first. Those initially less adept, but with ideas, or a sense of narrative structure, can creep up on and overtake the wordsmiths. If I were to place bets on literary outcomes, my money would be on Langenberg.

Lucy Sussex is a writer and reviewer.

Words at Play

John McLaren

Zita Denholm (ed.): *Corresponding Voices: the letters of Bill Scott and David Denholm 1963–1997* (Triple D Books, 3 Cassidy Parade, Wagga Wagga NSW 2650. Price on inquiry).

DAVID DENHOLM, academic and sometime soldier and bank officer, was also the novelist David Forrest. Bill Scott is the knockabout bushman turned bookseller, and now poet, storyteller, folklore collector and anthologist. This collection recalls their friendship over the three decades that they exchanged letters full of opinions, plans,

ideas, news, gossip and observation of the human comedy. The letters cover family excitements and tragedies, but are always full of wit and insight as the two men strike words from their daily experience.

Zita Denholm, David Denholm's widow, explains that these letters are not being published, in the sense that they are not being printed to be sold to the community.

Rather, "They are being circulated to a narrow grouping of family and friends. The work of preparing the edition is my tribute to my late husband." Her tribute is nevertheless of appropriately high scholarly

standards, and the annotations offer a wealth of information. It also contains otherwise unpublished poems by Scott and occasional writings by both. The joy of the collection however is in the entrance it gives into the minds of the two writers, allowing the reader to see them stretching their wits to the full in the serious play of the letters. By making the letters public, the editor invites readers to join the circle of the families and their friends.

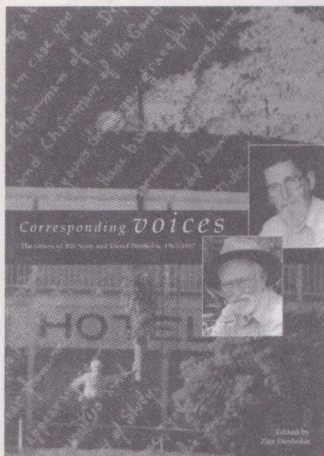
The collection can be read in many ways. It is easiest to pick it up and browse, starting at random and allowing the words to lead where they will. But when I tried this method, I found myself being constantly led back, to track down previous incidents referred to in the letter I was reading, and to follow on, to see what happened next. Eventually, I had to start at the beginning and read the book in more orthodox fashion from beginning to end, like an epistolary novel. Even this brought no closure, for I want to go back and read or re-read the two authors' published work, which I now find I know only in the most fragmentary and incomplete sense.

I would particularly like to read the history of the war in Papua that Denholm was working on but apparently never published. He wrote of it that it was "a book about how Australian society came to misunderstand the significance of the Papuan campaign and to misunderstand much of what happened in the campaign. It's no bloody wonder, considering the states of mind of our senior ning-nongs, the ones who could have given society a comprehensive and lucid account . . . It was a strange war . . . it says something about an immature society."

Elsewhere Denholm comments on the strange figures of Queensland politics, and the similarly strange ways of higher education in the Riverina, on troubles with neighbours, on children's problems and triumphs, on tradesmen and farm gates and cabbies and culture. Scott replies with news of his travels and writings, on teetotalers and dogs and local names and customs and poetry and pensions and publishers.

Just as an example of the delights of this book, here is Denholm transmuting successive disaster into high comedy:

Denholms have been having a traumatic week and could do with some cheering up. The highlight or lowlight of miscellaneous events was last Saturday when the beauteous Madeline took off for the Albury Music Camp in Andrew's Galant,



complete with six-week-old 'P' plates. At Yerong Creek the suspension bar broke, and B.M. and car finished upside down on a fence. The burghers of Yerong Creek advanced at the double and rescued the beauteous maiding, undamaged. Seat belt, Scotts, she was swinging upside-down in the same. The Galant is a dead loss. The assessor fronted up to it on Tuesday, wrote "Write Off" and departed.

As Andrew was due to come home on Sunday, complete with the wagon, horse float and horse, Mrs D said, "I wonder what Andrew can do?" Come Sunday, and by 2 p.m. I thought, "Where can the lad be?" The phone rang. Fortunately, I answered it. Andrew, "I'm at the Dog on the Tuckerbox. I've got two cents in my pocket. And I'm out of petrol."

Question, Scotts. What do you do when one of your two cars has just wiped itself out, and the other is at the Dog with no petrol?

It is through such domestic drama that we see the public events through which these two men and their families lived their friendship. I can only recommend that *overland* readers write off and get copies and give them to all their friends.

John McLaren is overland's consulting editor

Killed according to the Law

Christopher Lee

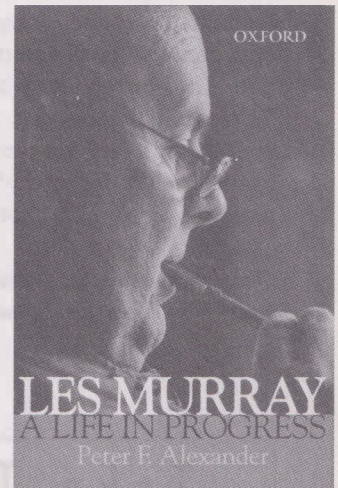
Peter F. Alexander: *Les Murray: A Life in Progress* (OUP, \$49.95).

PETER F. ALEXANDER'S account of Les A. Murray is the story of a heroic genius who courageously battled the wounds of his psyche to become a poet with 'no modern peer'. It is a good tale, well told and worthy of attention. He provides a few entertaining anecdotes, a pretty useful life story, and some genuinely interesting psychological analyses of the influence of Murray's dark past on the habits and attitudes that characterise his prose and verse. Les emerges as the childhood victim of abusive peers who took umbrage at the eccentricities of his size, his inclinations and his talent. The poet is now forever wary of the tyrannies of mob opinion whether

it relates to Arts funding, the New Australian Poetry, Pauline Hanson or the Stolen Generation. It's a pretty long bow to draw between the teenage kids at Murray's High School and those old leftie intellectuals who so clearly dominate Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer's public culture, but metaphors will run amuck in the unconscious.

We all know that Murray's a pretty good bloke and a cluey one at that and I'm not sure a reactionary psychology borne out of childhood torment does him justice. Allowing psychology to stand in for cultural history, this book never really gives us a good enough look at the social, cultural and political contexts required for a full appreciation of the poet's contribution to Australian culture. One reason is the influence of the old romantic assumption about the privileges of poetic genius. Les is a brilliant poet, he's internationally famous, and he's had a hard time of it, and that seems to be enough to entitle his opinion on a host of pretty complex topics. The biographer rarely pays much attention to the different sides of the many debates the great poet has bought into. Nor does he pay enough attention to the many and varied criticisms that have been made of his subject's outspoken opinions. Murray's views are explained for the most part in personal terms, in the context of his psychological profile, or in the moralistic language of character and literary evaluation.

I really would have liked more critical attention, more debate, more cultural history and a little less of this heroic language of personal character and artistic distinction. The result would have been quite a different book. But then I don't believe that victimage or genius frees anyone from the burden of social accountability. A lot of people have had a pretty hard time of it but alas not everybody gets to be fuhrer. What's more, high culture alone doesn't amount to much unless it has social purchase. Murray is someone who has had a tilt at bridging the divide between high and low (not to mention metropolitan and regional) culture and the literary tools of Oxbridge don't seem equal to the task of accounting for



it. Les has sold a lot of poetry books and this makes him a popular poet who is also serious and important. At times, however, *Les Murray: A Life in Progress* tends to assume that seriousness, popularity and significance are much the same thing.

The marketing blurb describes *Les Murray* as a "riveting story, told with all the psychological subtlety and narrative thrust of a good novel". Allowing for the hyperbole characteristic of the genre, this is a fair claim. Murray is a fascinating character and an internationally celebrated poet and Alexander's version of how it all came to be is entertaining and informative. The blurb goes on to say, however, that "It places Les Murray . . . at the centre of his country's literary life through the second half of the twentieth century" – and that, unfortunately, is a claim I cannot go along with.

Christopher Lee teaches Australian Literature at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba.

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IN THIS ISSUE

In one of the most dazzling deceptions in contemporary history, this huge expansion of the logic of greed has been sold as a moral triumph.

R.W. Connell, p.8

Australian attempts to cover up mass murder in East Timor and deny the Aboriginal genocide both involved groups associated with the conservative journals *News Weekly* and *Quadrant*.

Ben Kiernan, p.25

I do not subscribe for a moment to the view that Senator Bill Heffernan was acting on some sort of lone crusade as the Prime Minister and many commentators have repeatedly stated. Howard was fully apprised of Heffernan's claims.

Jenny Hocking, p.64

While poker machines are recognised as a social problem, the speculative purchase of stocks goes largely unremarked.

Nathan Hollier, p.94

They sit uneasily with the proprietorial role *Australian Book Review* credits itself with – which, far from being 'disinterested', filters and directs, overpraises friends and colleagues, and, in true *gangland* style, doles out reviews to a select few, many either board members or editorial advisors.

Ken Gelder, p.76

The criteria of the Refugee Convention favour Eastern European athletes and blithely encourage nationalist identification; but they rule out most of the reasons for movement and flight today.

Angela Mitropoulos, p.69

It's wacky stuff, made weirder by the perceived need to assert the bravery of contributors to *Blaming Ourselves* for aligning themselves with the entire media establishment and the world's sole superpower in opposition to Australia's letter-writers, emailers and picture-putter-uppers.

Jeff Sparrow, p.97

PRAISE FOR OVERLAND

"The most exciting in its field"

Ross Fitzgerald, *The Australian*

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Debra Adelaide, *Sydney Morning Herald*

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Fiona Capp, *The Age*

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Christopher Bantick, *Canberra Times*



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