

WESTERLY

STORIES • POEMS • ARTICLES • REVIEWS



AUTUMN 1995 NUMBER 5 \$5.00

BULMURN



Bulmurn, medicine man to the Swan River Nyoongars, saw the skin of his people change, saw sickness strike the children of his clan, saw traditional learning falter. Refusing to continue healing those of mixed blood, he was punished and cast out. Alone, his power grew, but when used with deadly results against the Wadjbullas, that power precipitated the hunt for his life.

A major new release from University of Western Australia Press, *Bulmurn* is a rare combination of historical fiction with tribal beliefs and legendary figures, reflecting on the conflict between two wildly divergent cultures. Richard Wilkes, a descendant of the Darbalyung Nyoongar people, wrote *Bulmurn* from stories which were passed to him in the Aboriginal tradition of oral story telling.

Publication assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body

AVAILABLE AT ALL GOOD BOOK SHOPS

PAPERBACK RRP \$16.95 ISBN 1 875560 41 6



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESS
TUART HOUSE NEDLANDS WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6009 TEL (09) 380 3670 FAX (09) 380 1027

CONTENTS

WESTERLY

VOLUME 40, No. 1, AUTUMN 1995

STORIES

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|----|
| The Pomegranate Tree | <i>Rosanne Dingli</i> | 7 |
| Ariadne's Labyrinth | <i>Ruth Callaghan</i> | 11 |
| It Happened to Mathew Again | <i>Steven Miller</i> | 29 |
| The Woman Who Turned Into a Lizard | <i>Carolyn Logan</i> | 45 |
| Amanda's Flowers | <i>Catherine McIver</i> | 59 |
| Jane and her Gun | <i>Kathryn Goldie</i> | 62 |
| Under the Glass Slide | <i>Dionne Newton</i> | 73 |

POEMS

| | | | |
|------------------|----|--------------------------|----|
| Jean Kent | 13 | Dale Harcombe | 49 |
| Ouyang Yu | 15 | Sue Moss | 50 |
| Andrew Sant | 18 | Graham Rowlands | 51 |
| Heather Cam | 26 | David Ray | 52 |
| Rory Steele | 27 | Richard Hillman | 65 |
| Alice Friman | 35 | John L. Malone | 66 |
| Bronwen Morrison | 36 | R.G. Hay | 72 |
| Kenneth C Steven | 37 | Lisa Bellear (Noonuccal) | 82 |
| Clayton Hansen | 38 | Justin Macdonnell | 83 |

ARTICLES

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|----|
| Dame Mary Durack | <i>Alison Puchy-Palmos</i> | 5 |
| Transgressive Spaces: Helen Garner's "Cosmo Cosmolino" | <i>Philippa Kelly</i> | 19 |
| Patrick White's "Five-twenty" | <i>Lee Spinks</i> | 39 |
| The Use of Burning Swans | <i>John Mateer</i> | 53 |
| Frank Moorhouse's "Grand Days" and Post-Colonial Idealism | <i>Nicholas Birns</i> | 67 |

REVIEWS

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|----|
| Drusilla Modjeska, "The Orchard" | <i>Heather Neilson</i> | 84 |
| Ian Hamilton (ed), "The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Poetry" | <i>Les Harrop</i> | 85 |
| Kevin Hart (ed), "The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse" | <i>David McCooey</i> | 87 |
| Sneja Gunew, "Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Theory" | <i>Tony Simoes da Silva</i> | 89 |
| Penny Gay, "As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women" | <i>Charles Edelman</i> | 90 |
| Gina Merger, "Janet Frame, Subversive Fictions" | <i>Michael Denholm</i> | 92 |
| Ron Davidson, "High Jinks at the Hot Pool" | <i>Collin O'Brien</i> | 93 |

CONTRIBUTORS

95

Cover design by Robyn Mundy of Mundy Design using a portrait of Mary Durack by Elizabeth Durack. See page 4 for details.

From the Editors' Desk

Patricia Hackett Prize

The Editors are pleased to announce that the winner of the 1995 Patricia Hackett Prize for the best contribution to *Westerly* in the previous calendar year is Karen Van Ulzen for her story "The Granny Killer" which appeared in No.1, Autumn, 1994.

Westerly Goes to War

As readers will know, the final issue of *Westerly* for each year is a special issue devoted to a selected theme or concept. In 1995, taking note that the year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the ending of World War II, the theme will be War. Stories and poems concerning any aspect of war (in general, not just the Second World War) are welcome. *Westerly* is also interested in articles dealing with the impact of war on social and cultural life, rather than straightforward histories of campaigns or individual battles.

Westerly Funding: The Bleak Future

The Editors regret to announce that funding for *Westerly* from the State Government's Department for the Arts has been cut drastically, with a declaration that the Department "could not guarantee ongoing investment" and advice that the magazine "seek assistance from a wide variety of sources". A December letter to the Department asking for suggestions as to how this might be done has not yet been answered. One immediate development is that each issue of *Westerly* for the foreseeable future will be restricted to a maximum of 96 pages and there will be no internal colour photographs. We are also looking at other ways to cut costs or increase funding. Regrettably, it is inevitable that less material will be published than in the past and that contributors will be paid at lower rates. It must be pointed out that *Westerly* is a non-profit making venture that survives only with the assistance of: the Department for the Arts and the Literature Board, and the Centre for Studies in Australian Literature and the English Department at The University of Western Australia. The Co-editors are not paid.

Simultaneously, the Literature Board of the Australia Council is undertaking a complete review of its funding of literary magazines, with the likelihood of funding cuts and a proposal being mooted that the Board fund fewer, larger magazines. We feel concerned that such action will reduce the diversity important to Australia's literature and culture, and may limit even more severely than at present the chance for Western Australia to be heard.

The Board is calling for submissions (to PO Box 788, Strawberry Hills 2012). Whatever your view, if you have any thoughts on the role of magazines in Australian literary and cultural life we urge you to make a submission. A full text of the Board's letter, and of *Westerly's* submission in response, is available from Caroline Horobin at *Westerly's* office.

WESTERLY

a quarterly review

ISSN 0043-342x

EDITORS: *Delys Bird, Dennis Haskell*

EASTERN STATES EDITOR: *Bruce Bennett*

EDITORIAL ADVISORS: *Margot Luke, Julie Lewis (prose),
Brenda Walker (reviews) Fay Zwicky (poetry)*

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS: *Diana Brydon (University of Guelph), Giovanna Capone (Bologna University), Yasmine Gooneratne (Macquarie University), Brian Matthews (Flinders University), Vincent O'Sullivan (Victoria University, Wellington), Peter Porter (London), Robert Ross (University of Texas at Austin), Anna Rutherford (University of Aarhus), Andrew Taylor (Edith Cowan University), Edwin Thumboo (National University of Singapore)*

ADMINISTRATOR: *Caroline Horobin*

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: *Deborah Fitzpatrick*

Westerly is published quarterly at the Centre for Studies in Australian Literature in the English Department, The University of Western Australia with assistance from the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, and the State Government of W.A. through the Department for the Arts. The opinions expressed in *Westerly* are those of individual contributors and not of the Editors or Editorial Advisors.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Editors, *Westerly*, Department of English, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia 6009 (telephone (09) 380 2101, fax (09) 380 1030), email westerly@uniwa.uwa.edu.au. Unsolicited manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All manuscripts must show the name and address of the sender and should be typed (double-spaced) on one side of the paper only. Whilst every care is taken of manuscripts, the editors can take no final responsibility for their return; contributors are consequently urged to retain copies of all work submitted. Minimum rates for contributors - poems \$40.00; reviews \$60.00; stories/articles \$90.00.

Subscriptions: \$24.00 per annum (posted); \$42.00 for 2 years (posted). Special student subscription rate: \$18.00 per annum (posted). Single copies \$5 (plus \$1 postage). Email Subscriptions \$10.00 to westerly@uniwa.uwa.edu.au. Subscriptions should be made payable to *Westerly* and sent to The Secretary, CSAL, Department of English, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands, Western Australia 6009.

Work published in *Westerly* is cited in: *Abstracts of English Studies, Australian Literary Studies Annual Bibliography, Australian National Bibliography, Journal of Commonwealth Literature Annual Bibliography, Arts and Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents/Arts & Humanities, The Genuine Article, Modern Language Association of America Bibliography, The Year's Work in English Studies*, and is indexed in *APIAS: Australian Public Affairs Information Service* (produced by the National Library of Australia) and *AUSTLIT*, the Australian Literary On-Line Database.

Three *Westerly* Indexes 1956-77, 1978-83 and 1984-8, are available at \$5.00 each from the above address.

Department for
the Arts



Government of Western Australia



Note on the cover portrait of Mary Durack

This portrait consists of a montage of torn photographs glued on to canvas.

The work measures 157 x 126 cm plus an additional 3cm where the image wraps around the sides of the wooden stretcher.

The torn fragments are arranged to form a swirl — as of a river of words and of time — and are indicative of the places and the period in Australian history covered by my sister's literary work. Against this background the author's face, painted on thin film, is floated with glimpses of the background visible behind the forehead.

My sister loved this portrait concept of herself and was moved to tears when looking at it on completion in December 1980.

Elizabeth Durack
January 1995

Dame Mary Durack 1913-1994

"I'm not afraid of dying. I'm not afraid of death, but I am frightened I won't get time to finish my book. It is a great Australian saga and it needs to be told."

So Dame Mary Durack told *The Bulletin* in an interview 15 years ago, as she battled to complete *Sons in the Saddle*, the sequel to her immensely popular first volume of the Durack family history, *Kings in Grass Castles*.

Both books have since taken their place as Australian classics and remain heavily in demand in bookshops and lending libraries throughout the country. Age and failing health conspired to prevent Durack completing the third volume of the trilogy, the book in which she planned to bring the rich Durack history up to present day.

Mary Durack, author of 15 books and two plays, was the descendant of one of Australia's most famous pioneer families.

Despite her widespread literary acclaim, Dame Mary was never particularly satisfied with the results. Her daughter Patsy says that she "never realised the value and quality of her major works, drawing attention always instead to the whimsical children's books she wrote with her sister, Elizabeth, in their youth. In her latter years she would pick up any of her books and be surprised that she wrote them. She would say she felt someone else wrote them. That was because the real writer was always a separate person from the homely, modest body who was the other Mary Durack."

Although her books were preoccupied with pioneering life and the Australian bush, Mary lived most of her life in cities. Born in Adelaide in 1913, the second of Michael (MP) and Bessie Durack's six children, Mary Durack spent her early childhood in the Kimberley area in WA's far north, living on either Ivanhoe or Argyle station, the great Durack properties. Her parents moved the family home to Perth as the Durack children neared school age, and they were educated in the city. Mary and her brothers and sisters did not return to the North until school was finished.

Mary Durack started by writing verse, which her parents proudly collected and had published in a leather-bound book called *Little Poems of Sunshine*.

"My mother was always terribly embarrassed about the book and never liked it being brought up," says daughter Patsy, pulling out the last remaining copy from a bookshelf in Dame Mary's living room.

Dame Mary explained her embarrassment to an interviewer many years later, saying the book "set me apart, as a kind of freak. I longed to be good at basketball, but instead I was a child-poet."

At sixteen, Mary persuaded her parents to let her return to the North, where she played an active role in running the family stations, and began writing articles about station life in the Kimberley. She sent these to city newspapers and magazines, who printed them.

Her younger sister, Elizabeth, who has made a reputation as a fine artist, joined Mary on the properties after finishing school, and the pair teamed up to produce a series of outback sketches, with words by Mary and pictures by Elizabeth. They later

collaborated to produce several popular children's books, including *All About, Chunuma, The Way of the Whirlwind* and *The Magic Trumpet*.

It was during Mary's years in the North that she developed a deep and enduring bond with local Aborigines and respect for their laws and culture. "The Ivanhoe time was significant, as far as our understanding of the Blacks was concerned," Dame Mary once said. "They regarded us as their responsibility and looked after us all the time, always most tactfully and never being obtrusive about it."

A group of her elderly Aboriginal friends, on hearing that she had been diagnosed with cancer, in September drove out to the "Durack spirit country" and staged an all-night corroboree in a bid to "sing" her better. Although a practising Catholic, Dame Mary respected Aboriginal mythology — and often referred to her miraculous recovery after being "sung better" following a road accident.

Dame Mary's life was punctuated by tragic episodes that severely tested her resolve, but from which she always managed to rebound.

Perhaps the most painful knocks were the tragic deaths of two of her six children, Julie, 26, to a post-operative blood clot in 1969, and Robin, 34, to a malignant tumour in 1975.

Mary Durack was knocked by a car while crossing a busy Perth highway in 1970. The accident left Dame Mary with a fractured skull, shattered leg and fractured pelvis and robbed her of her sense of taste and smell. It occurred while Dame Mary was nursing her husband, pioneer aviator Horace Miller, after a stroke. Despite her massive injuries and her husband's death the following year, Dame Mary recovered to complete *Sons in the Saddle* and several other works.

The author clearly inherited the indomitable spirit and sense of purpose of her Irish grandfather, Patsy Durack, the central figure in *Kings in Grass Castles*.

Dame Mary received numerous awards for her literary and community contributions throughout her lifetime, including an OBE in 1966, DBE in 1978, the Commander of the Order of Australia (1989) and an honorary doctorate in literature from the University of WA.

Geoffrey Bolton, Professor of History at Edith Cowan University, points to the active role Dame Mary played in the Fellowship of Australian Writers, of which she was an early member, and in which she was instrumental in bridging gaps between establishment and working class writers.

"Her books were of great historical significance, particularly through her technique of combining oral history with written records, and placing the spotlight on the role of the pioneer women," says Bolton. "Before *Kings in Grass Castles*, much of the writing about the bush had been in a very masculine tradition. Mary pulled it back to the family and shifted the attention to the importance of the women, quoting her grandfather's words: 'Heaven help the country if it weren't for the women!'"

Kings in Grass Castles has never been out of print and has sold more than 250,000 copies since it was first published in London in 1959.

Plans are advanced to produce a four-hour television mini series, based on the book, with shooting expected to begin next year in Ireland, Queensland and Western Australia.

Alison Puchy-Palmos

The Pomegranate Tree

In the garden where once my mother sat and waited for me, stands an old pomegranate tree. In October, hard leathery globes of fruit split in old smiles, glistening in rain, rent by lightning, cleft by the very weather they wait for. Silent rain, mudding the ground flattened and hardened by the summer.

In the summer, in June and August, branches so thin and so dead-looking surprise me again with leaves. Spearlike and a tentative green, they appear without announcement. My feet pound brown stony soil around the slim trunk. Earth flat and packed, allowing only nettles — and some hardy night-flowering shrub she called *Bella di notte* — to ring the paving stones with foliage.

There was a painted chair. Green curled chipped paint fell away to litter the ground around it when my mother sat on its warped plywood seat. A slatted back, bowed not only by the efforts of some forgotten carpenter, held the mottled fabric of a maternity smock.

A blue enamel bowl was full of fruit: pomegranates bought from some greengrocer whose scales rang and clattered, swung in the interior of a shop where it was always autumn, and always smelled of sacking and damp newspaper. An enamel bowl, stained and dented, black rim cracked with age. Fruit was released from leathery skin with no small effort. Pomegranate kernels fell like pink tears.

My mother waited, peeling the fruit until the bowl was full, the ground around her crowded with slivers of skin. Skin rosy on the outside and a cream suede on the inside, held together by shiny membranes still bearing the dents of glassy fruit.

She took palmsful of the shiny kernels. Red ones russet as a dewy autumn, small pink ones like babies' thumbs, the white ones madonna's tears. The fruit tinkled into her mouth, slid against her teeth. She chewed, chose with her tongue, swallowed and spat seeds to the ground. With her heel, she hacked indentations in the stony ground, pushing the moist spat seeds into them.

I was born in October. Dry, no rain, and hardly a breath of the Mediterranean wintry gales around the grey stones of the house. Hardly a drop of the slanting rains which would lash against window panes and seek entry around the thick wooden beams of our roof.

Small and hardly noticeable in my infant silence, I knew neither when the clouds broke nor when the earth in the garden was reduced to ochre mud. No drops on the thick yellow lemons still pendant under leaves, no hard black seeds held in small

green cups on the *Bella di notte* bushes, caught my eyes. I slept through my first winter.

Through their first winter, the pomegranate seeds my mother had hidden with her heel in the ground lay garnering their first surprise. It was not an instant surprise, filling the receptor with joy or fury in the sly second it was sprung. The pomegranate tree grew slowly, lancing leaves through the soil and shedding them for a few seasons before it was noticed.

It was the October tree, fruiting suddenly and bursting its fruit with annual surprise. "I sat there and waited for you," she said once, pointing to a place near the tree. She showed me how her heel would dig small holes for the seeds.

No rubble walls can hold the nettle or the *Bella di notte*. There are no stones that can contain some plants. They spread their roots and seeds in sweet defiance of hoe and hand. Trees are different. They hold their sway from one spot, and if they move, we are too slow to see it. Or too quick, too intrepid in our search for likeness. Next door, past the rubble wall, they complained of vagrant weeds allowed to flourish in a delinquent garden. My mother laughed.

My tree as well escaped the confines of that wall, sending thin branches over its top, sprouting new leaves to shade another neater garden. Every October, waiting for the first flashes of lightning which would cleave the fruit, I counted the neighbour's harvest; the pomegranates hanging heavy and leathery and weighing branches over the stone wall.

This October, I stand in the place where once my mother sat and waited for me. The tree is weighted by a harvest of pomegranates so large, so heavy, they threaten to fall suddenly to the pounded earth, letting thin branches spring back with such relief and vigour they would startle the sky. Pierce it with lanceolate leaves, bring hail and thunder.

The bark is light and furrowed, flaked and dry like the paint on the green chair which is gone now. Gone also is the green bench with slatted arms, whose flat seat grew so hot in the summer sun it was only used in the early morning or at night. Gone is the stone table at the end of the garden near the lemon tree, and Peter, the stone boy whose carved arms held in perpetual struggle a fish almost as large as himself.

But the pomegranate tree waits for the lightning, and the gathering clouds are all grey and laden with storms. The Mediterranean winds are rallying at the edges of islands, pushing and scolding so that when they burst, they take before them protests in high shrill voices.

The house shakes with the fury of storms. The bathroom window loses more of its ancient glazing putty, dried to stone in its rattling frame. The shutters have loose slats and their paint is long gone; fallen in shreds to the red and white tiled yard below. There is no dust left to be blown away from the wrought railings of the loggia, and the stained glass sections rattle a din into the house, down the stairs and through the low doorways like it always did.

The blocks of limestone have worn corners, and their whitewash peels away. The wind and rain erode runnels in steps worn to concave bowls by the feet of familiars. The drops gathered there will outlast the tempest, and cats will lick the thresholds dry.

When the sun admits defeat it is a terrible sight. The curtains balloon, the architraves admit in shaking throes they fit no more. There is mortar sifting and flaking to the floor.

Where once a tide of rising damp left its fungal trail like clouds on the wall above the skirting, there is now a soft patina of grey dust which does not cling to the fingers. Everything is waiting for the din of thunder.

Flagstones yield to the step in the upstairs rooms, the ones in the corners still bearing evidence of yellow oiling; the ones in the pathway leading room to room porous and dusty as rocks on the coast.

A winding staircase carved from blocks of stone spirals upward and downward into darkness created by the turn of a switch. I once sat on one of those steps and traced with small fingers a cross, etched by some mason to bear witness not only of his craft and his faith but of his existence. I too required a testimonial and engraved a trifling initial under the cross of St John. My marks are now too shallow to bear dust, the curves of my letter too angular to allow precise memory.

Taut wires stretched across the flat roof whine in the wind. Their scream is benign, their whimper as the storm intensifies a known precursor to a clamorous evening.

When it finally comes, the storm is loud and furious. In the house, I stand with my back to the jammed accordion shutters of the kitchen, which never really worked as they were intended. I see shadows flashed across alcoves where clay bottles and the statue of a brown cow are highlighted for an instant. There is a small glazed window with a latch overlooking the sitting room. I hear again the dull unmistakable thud of its ill fit as a draught clatters past like a breeze.

In the hall the banisters wheeze with the storm. The rafters seep water. I hear slashing and hissing from tyres in puddles in the street. The solid wooden door thumps helplessly against the jamb.

Almost inaudible, a hum emerges from two long copper pipes which utter such a clanging alarm when the doorbell is rung.

The floor is paved in patterned tiles. Rugs lie obedient, with only a slight curl at fringed corners to state condition and age. Artificial candles fitted with flame-shaped bulbs stutter as thunder rumbles overhead and past the house. There is an empty cage and in a corner, a box and blanket owned by a succession of motley dogs.

Heat rises from a kerosene heater. It is as efficient and welcoming as when I was a child. The fiery hemisphere emits an almost audible hum and to bask in its radiation is a reenactment of something familiar.

It is warm in here now. The house tilts and slides against the storm, the yard fills with gushes that slide over the red and white tiles. I hear protests from the thick knitted honeysuckle limbs which have wound their way over decades to the upstairs windows. The leaves and yellow buds are invisible in the wet and dark out there, but I see them. Hail is drumming on the stone cover of the well, which is being fed in copious draughts through terracotta pipes.

But it is warm in here now. I sit on an armchair whose bad springs are a welcome memory, whose new cover conceals brocade or chintz with cabbage roses — or lilacs and daisies in upturned umbrellas; designs with ulterior purposes. Books lie face down on padded arms of chairs that cradled readers into the dull stormy hours of night.

There is a thin thread of cigarette smoke curling around the light, which swings

slightly from the upsurge of warm air from the heater. I am not smoking, but the curl of smoke is not a vapour. It is like the tree outside in the storm, whose fruit is bursting with the urgency of seasons.

In the garden where once my mother sat and waited for me, the ground is diluted and runs with a dull redness. Fruit cracks and smiles, pearly kernels flashing like teeth grinning with fearlessness at the storm. Soon it will die down, and patters and squelches of wetness diminish into the dawn.

Sleeping in this house is like trying to capture autumn and have it forever burnish the outside of your windows. It is impossible to lie still. The mattress creaks. The ceiling, although invisible in the dark, sends moisture in broadening circles from points in its centre where it has leaked. None of the drops reach the floor.

The morning is stark and bright, the sun neither watery nor timid. This is the Mediterranean response to the tempest. It sparkles, casting neither contempt nor vindictiveness upon the still-restless waves in the bays, but shimmering warmth designed to scoop up what is left of the water.

Evaporation occurs at all temperatures, but in warmth like this it is visible as steam. The garden is releasing moisture, with grateful leaves abandoning the last drops with upward motion, like offerings. The trees lose superfluous wet weight. The pomegranates are split. Dozens of leathery globes swing in the sunlight, blushing skin soon to be discarded like offcuts of hide.

My mother sits on a wooden bench. The house is behind her. I reach into the branches and cut three large pomegranates and place them in a large glass bowl.

RUTH CALLAGHAN

Ariadne's Labyrinth

He started by making some silly joke. About bicycles. Beware the rides of March. And he made her laugh. He was introduced by a friend. Dark hair. Nice teeth. And when he laughed at her reply...

I am Ariadne. Welcome to my maze. Congratulations. You have passed the first test. Not many do.

They chatted. Mutual friends. Common interests. Favourite movies. They argued over music. Quoted lines from films. Laughed. He was intelligent, handsome, witty. And his eyes seemed to watch...

You see, most don't get past the first stage. Step one: I want to smile. That's all. Some never even get that far. Will you believe all my games? Here's a clue: Listen, but don't believe everything I tell you. Watch out for the traps...

His friend made a comment about the coffee. It wasn't very good. No, she agreed, it wasn't very good. His friend looked at the walls. He didn't like the wallpaper. Or the carpet. The one with the eyes thought the decor was probably designed horribly to make the coffee taste good in contrast. She laughed. His friend smiled, and discussed the mosaic. "Prosaic..." whispered the beautiful-eyed one. She gazed at him in delight.

I don't let just anyone in you know. Some I do. Some I keep out. Some get in and I let them stay but they keep hitting blind corners. Some I think about admitting but I know they will never make it past the first trap. You got through. Are you the one?

They went for a walk to the foreshore. He told her about his life. His childhood. She understood. All the things he said struck chords within her. A vibrato of recognition. Images of his dreams were realised in her own mind. Pictures of beauty. Excitement. Pathos. Glory. Perhaps...

Perhaps you really are ... you seem to wander the paths of the maze with surety. You pass over

all the snares, traps, almost as though you have been here once already ... have you puzzled this route before? Do you already know my riddle? Theseus, is this you?

He said that they could talk better than he could with most people. She seemed to know what he was thinking. He grinned. He made a joke. She laughed on cue. She waited for him to ask.

Please? Come into my parlour said the fly to the spider ... entangle me in your web. I want you to figure me out...

He asked for her phone number, and she watched him scrawl it on the back of his hand. "There is only one 'r' in Ariadne."

Only one 'r' in fear, in hurt, in dream, in labyrinth...

He called. They met for coffee in the place with the ugly walls and tacky mosaic. "I wish I could talk to all girls the way I can talk to you" he said.

I wish ... I wish...

He smiled. "You see," he said, "There is this girl I know..."

Doors slam ... Alarms ... I retreat ... You fall plunging into the deepest pit in the maze. I hope you die.

JEAN KENT

Dancers Above the Hardware

Does discovered
through green twigs parted,
now they nuzzle silk air . . .

In a studio above Mitre Ten
and Retravision,
ghosts of Jodie-Anne and Karen-Lynn,
Morag and Gayleen
shadow their younger sisters as they seek
a space, a year
between dressing Barbie dolls for fun
and dressing themselves for the drive-in
in earnest.

Though they waddled upstairs
video-clip callow in their tutus,
now they flutter round the ghetto blaster's beat
a dream menagerie . . .
Now they discover
delicate falls of ankles, arms and hands.
Their necks seek sky
their heads turn on thin stalks
like tulip buds
their shoulders as they fly down softly
breeze past views
of lycra-gleaming eucalypts
newly stripped.

Resting at the barre, their legs
will die like drumbeats their fingers flake
into silence —
but now the forest they have shivered through
drops camellia showers
as their limbs
grow graceful angles and their lovely
looping glances off walls, windows, green trees . . .
lift them beyond
the late-night shopping under this floor
for nails, microwaves, kitchen paint.

Above Mitre Ten and Retravision now
in a puff of breath
they should rise and disappear —
before the petal dance is done, the gum trees
in the dusk peel up dark leggings

and in the practice hall bending
to retie her shoe,
every young fawn fades
as her wrist flicks fingernails pirouette
resin and sweat collide
and there where the collarbone slopes
and the skin is a cream shadow
too young yet, too delicate
to cradle kisses

precisely there, wearily, her swansong
of veiled blood throbs.

Word Prison: A Lesson

what does it mean, word prison? your son asked
well, word means word and prison, prison, you said
why word and prison?
because, you began, then the sheer difficulty in explaining
such an odd combination overwhelmed you
to a boy being brought up in australia though born chinese
having never seen a prison not to say a word prison
you nevertheless began:

what it means is that in ancient china
one can be imprisoned or even killed for saying something wrong
or writing something wrong
why, Son asked
Because, you stopped feeling incompetent to go on
because, well, don't ask me so much
what it means is that YOU can be put in prison or killed
for saying something like:
Father I dislike you
or Mother I hate you
That is why there is an old chinese saying that goes:
disasters come out of the mouth of a person
(or a pen) the latter part being your own invention
anyway you are lucky in australia
you can say anything you like or dislike about australia without
being
persecuted or killed
remember the story you read
where a Ching official wrote a poem with these two lines:
'the clear breeze is so ignorant
why does he turn over my pages in such a wild manner?'
the word 'clear' sounds exactly the same as 'Ching' in chinese
which means the 'Ching Dynasty'
the poet was executed

word prison, Son murmured to himself, amused and interested
how nice if i could put the one in prison who sang 'ching chong
chinaman'
to me the other day or beat the guy with justice who called me 'you
fucking Chink pig'

not so here in australia Son, the father sighed
they hadn't even invented the word prison yet

Fuck You, Australia *from a penniless gambler*

when i was boarding the CAAC plane for home which is of course
china

i said to you through the arse hole of a window:

fuck you australia!

you thought i had made myself a millionaire didn't ya

digging for gold in your cheap sunshine

you thought i had wanted to get a kangaroo certificate

in order to live on the dole like a cheap unemployed fat man

you thought i had wanted to learn your english that called me

names

that fucked whenever you could anybody especially us

you thought i had liked your women because we were essentially

an immoral people that's right we came to you to look for fun in

sex in the first place because yours was supposed to be a

country flowing with gold and fuck-holes

you thought i was every bit unlike you

funny inscrutable wily cunning miserly full of dark designs

you thought in your heart of hearts that we were

not fit to share the continent with you

fuck you australia

i said to myself as if i was australia

i said that i'd go back to china and tell everybody how vastly

cheap is australia and mean

i said that i'd forget you as soon as this very second when i was

fastening my seat belt my shit belt

i said though remembering that i had never fucked anybody yet

that i'd come back one day and pick up an australian woman as

my tenth concubine

fuck you, australia

A Lesson on Eyes

slit-eyed almond-eyed slant-eyed and slopes
that unchanging view of the Western image of the East
never seems able to absorb the fluidity of other vocabularies
stunted by their own bloated sense of superiority

you told your audience of blonde hair yellowish hair and black hair
that in your language there are at least one hundred ways of describing
one's eyes

the most common type is
double-folded eyes
as favoured over single-folded eyes
then there are
red-phoenix eyes
rat eyes
bulging eyes
golden-fish eyes
thousand-li eyes
watery eyes
scar eyes
drunken eyes
triangle eyes
green-light eyes
thief eyes
fighting cock eyes
ox eyes
sand eyes
ocean white eyes
and many more
not just those three you know

now look at me
which eyes have i got?

For My Daughters

School's out: those English kings
and queens have nodded off. Expect,
these new-fledged days, the scents

your parents jettisoned on deck,
reclaimed like blooms frisked
from a magician's cloth - so!

it's true there are tales like doors
that disclose real folk who speak
your names. Now they stroll out

into the sun: spring leaves
swiftly are making shade; of olden
heights the squirrel is making light.

Canal, village, lane;
these too are your inheritance:
England, an abridged version; granting

beyond such bounds, I wish,
provision for childhood's tales
as sustaining as the squirrel's cache.

Transgressive Spaces: Helen Garner's *Cosmo Cosmolino*

While Helen Garner claims to concern herself with the smallnesses of everyday life, these smallnesses have a reverberative power. In the novella which is the third part of Garner's *Cosmo Cosmolino*, Maxine, the eccentric carpenter, makes a twig cradle, "lighter by far than any human babe could be; so light that the lightest puff of wind could set it in motion"¹. Although her housemate Ray sees "the twig thing" as "only a couple of scraps of wood fixed together and was that supposed to be art?"(86) the cradle has great potency for Maxine. In its fragility and its susceptibility to any wind, Maxine's cradle resists patriarchal ideals of solidity and permanence. It challenges the traditional opposition between male artificer and woman as bearer of the look; and it replays the Biblical nativity-scene in that the *female* carpenter now prepares for the Christ child.

To suggest that in *Cosmo Cosmolino* Garner rejects or inverts male myths is, however, to oversimplify both the tradition which she challenges and her work itself. Garner's triptych evokes the transgressive within the familiar. In celebrating constructions of femininity not just as they oppose the symbolic, but as they push through it, *Cosmo Cosmolino* touches a space beyond binary oppositions. Garner negotiates what Julia Kristeva has described as a relationship between memory and forgetting: the "insertion into history and the radical refusal of the subjective limitations imposed by history's time..."(448). In evoking this relationship between memory and forgetting, in speaking through (and not in spite of) the female body, and in resisting binary reductionisms, Garner's novel calls to mind Kristeva's preoccupations, and also those of Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous. I want to approach *Cosmo Cosmolino* in view of the ideas explored by these French Feminist writers.

Kristeva argues that social time (the time recognised by the Symbolic) and psychic time (through which women attempt to recapture cyclical rhythms and archaic, mythical memory) are incompatible yet indissociable ("Women's Time").² In her terms, one conception of time cannot be displaced by the other — it exists because of, and yet also beyond, the other. To divide them, insisting that patriarchal

1. Helen Garner, *Cosmo Cosmolino*, (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1992), 59.

2. Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time", *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991), 447.

ideals of order, hierarchy and resistance to change can be "forgotten" within a new world of postmodern feminist transgression, would not enable an escape from patriarchal linearity: rather, such a division would repeat this linearity by insisting on a chronological process of evolution. Like Kristeva, Garner is not content to reject historical necessity by insisting on the primacy of psychic rhythms. She does not suggest, for example, that only within psychic time can Maxine's postmodern creations flourish unimpeded by those preoccupations designated "patriarchal": this suggestion would portray Maxine as incapable of functioning within the familiar world of historical necessity. Maxine *does* exist in terms of linear exigency: but in insisting on her difference, she also transgresses its parameters.

Indeed, the whole form of Garner's literary triptych pushes beyond the oppositions that characterise historical necessity. In this sequence, past and future, memory and forgetting, are not opposed, but fluid in their association. The two short stories look forward to the larger themes developed in the novella, in which Janet, the narrator in "Recording Angel", and Ray, the boyfriend in "A Vigil", both re-appear. The Gothic structure of the novella, through the presence of the haunted house, the ghostly visions, and the strange wooden creations, has an ambiguous location. While the Gothic associations suggest a linear historical context, the ghostly visions and un-nameable creations reverberate with meanings which cannot be pinned to empirical necessity. The novella is permeated by its own narrative history, the images of death and desire which emerge not from linear time, but from cyclical and eternal time, and which gesture toward a significance yet to be revealed. The very prominence of the novella's gothic structure, therefore, highlights its subversion of its own form.

The first story in the triptych, "Recording Angel", is dominated by Patrick's linear recording of the past. Patrick, an old friend of the narrator, corrects her "sweepingly" (5), echoing the patriarchal overtones of Garner's previous male characters — Frank's "violent, swooping hand",³ and Dexter's way of "roaring" and "announcing" things (*The Children's Bach*). With great authority, Patrick gives the narrator back her past self. He even has it tabulated in scores of postcards which he has collected to record her development. He thereby transforms her experience into a series of stages, marking it out on a linear "grid-like framework and nail[ing] it down".⁴ In her use of the term "grid-like", Garner echoes the imagery in which Luce Irigaray has described the governance of patriarchal order. Irigaray suggests that to the "ready-made grids" of patriarchy the language of transgressive female rhythms is "inaudible".⁵ In Garner's semiology, the inaudible becomes the unrecognisable: while the postcards may submit to Patrick's rigorous ordering, they can just as easily be reshuffled to be read differently, suggesting other potential forms which he cannot nail down.

Although Patrick wants to see the past as "fixed",⁶ he literally embodies the collapse of linear time: he is losing his memory. If, in transgressive evocations of history, desire is an absence in language, so also is death. Patrick's will to control the

3. Helen Garner, *Honour and Other People's Children*, (Fitzroy: McPhee Gribble, 1980) 2.

4. *Honour and Other People's Children*, 6.

5. Luce Irigaray, "This Sex which is not One", *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, (New Brunswick, Rutgers UP, 1991), 354.

6. *Honour and Other People's Children*, 7.

symbolic is subverted by the inevitability of his death. Because he cannot control death, he cannot explain it; and because he cannot explain it, it is for him an absence. Like Beth in *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, for whom the past is a solid ground that "just crumbles",⁷ the narrator fears being cut adrift from historical necessity through Patrick's death. In the very presence of death as desire, however, she sees that to be thus cut adrift is to be freed from her place on Patrick's "grid-like framework". In the hospital Patrick's head, "shaved and with a bloody modess pad clapped to the back of it" (20), defies the narrator's attempts to find its place within the linear world which Patrick has marked out for her. Leaving the hospital, she draws from the recesses of history and imagination her own angel of mercy: "I felt that I knew him, that in some book or gallery I had seen his picture ... He was a small, serious, stone-eyed angel of mercy" (22).

Whereas death is anticipated in "Recording Angel", in the next story, "A Vigil", it is physically encountered. Outside the room in which Kim, Ray's girlfriend, lies dead, is the shrilling bird that has always driven her wild. As Ray stares at her mouth, "half open, ... clogged with vomit and alive with a busy-ness of insects", he jerks back "as if on a rein" (31). Desperately trying to retreat in the face of "history" making itself, he feels "across the ridges of his windpipe ... the shrieking, the squalling of the bird in the tree behind"(31). When Ray is grabbed by two tough angels of mercy and forced to watch Kim's feet transform in the crematorium fire, "... they loosened. They opened. They fell apart" (44). This is the "fact" of linear history. People die, and things fall apart.

"Falling apart", however, has a wider resonance for the triptych as a whole. It signifies not just the collapse of things *within* linear time, but some transformative possibilities for this notion of time itself. Pushing through linear exigencies are the eternal, cyclical and transformative rhythms of time in which feet become ashes and ashes become a "desert bed" (45). These rhythms are celebrated in the final part of the triptych, the novella, "Cosmo Cosmolino".

While the figure of Patrick has suggested Irigaray's vision of male "ready-made grids", the novella's principal character, Maxine, evokes Irigaray's vision of the female:

'She' is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious ... not to mention her language, in which 'she' sets off in all directions leaving 'him' unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason ... It is useless, then, to trap women in the exact definition of what they mean ... They do not have the interiority that you have, the one you perhaps suppose they have ... Thus what they desire is precisely nothing, and at the same time everything (354-55).

Yet Maxine is not an unequivocal figure of transgressive power. She is also situated very clearly within the familiar images of abnormality which are used by the Symbolic to designate otherness. Her furniture is "outlandish", with "threatening runes" (58); she takes a complete stranger into an unfamiliar bedroom because she believes he is an angel, undoes her pants and lies on the bed without even consulting

7. Helen Garner, *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1992), 108.

him; she has a "terrible bush of frizzy hair" (58). In Maxine, Garner thus conjoins images of conventional weirdness with suggestions of a transgressive otherness; the familiar merges with the unfamiliar.

It is ironic that the patriarchal forces which resist this tension between the familiar and the transgressive have been voiced in critical reviews of *Cosmo Cosmolino*. Peter Craven, for instance, sees Maxine as a "New Age bat", and criticises the text for being "open and unresolved".⁸ Speaking on behalf of historical notions of form and seriousness, Craven unwittingly writes himself into Garner's narratives, taking on the rigour not only of Patrick's grid-like framework, but also of Dexter Fox (*The Children's Bach*), who hates "modern American manners" which threaten the old rhythms with the new. While Maxine may evoke Luce Irigaray's vision of the creative female, Craven occupies the position of Irigaray's resistant, uncomprehending male who defines female creativity as "incomprehensible, agitated, capricious".⁹ Craven's unselfconscious parody of Garner's male figures has thus a powerful value: in writing himself into her text, he embodies Garner's own vision of the way in which the adherents of linear history resist transgressive forces.

While linear history may indeed resist a transgressive vision, it is, however, an integral part of this vision. In "Recording Angel", it gives Janet the self which is an amalgam of "countless" postcards, while in "Cosmo Cosmolino" it furnishes her with the memories of the seventies which are scattered throughout her house; and it gives Maxine the memories of past relationships ("You are rushing me, Maxine") on which she builds her conception of what she wants and of who will be her angel. Without historical necessity, these characters would have nothing on which to build; and yet without pushing *through* it, they would not build. In *Cosmo Cosmolino*, Garner thus suggests that while her female characters self-consciously "forget" the limits of the linear past, they do not forsake this past. In taking shape through the memory of what it is no longer contained by, this self-conscious "forgetting" suggests Helene Cixous' vision of a "new history":

... it's not a dream, though it does extend beyond men's imagination ... It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded — which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system ... It will be conceived of ... by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate.¹⁰

It is because "a feminine practice of writing" is "impossible to define" that psychic rhythms are so important to *Cosmo Cosmolino*. Through the structure of what has been, emerge the flights of what is new. Garner's "world, little world" celebrates those "peripheral [female] figures" who transgress regulatory systems.

Through the borders of the old, the fixed, the patriarchal, Garner's female characters glimpse a postmodern, shifting world of unstable signifiers: "Bite the bullet ... plug on, one foot in front of the other and keep going" (52). While the worlds of the first two stories brutally erode the myths of historical necessity — in the crumbling

8. Peter Craven, "Garner Has an Encounter with Religion", *The Australian*, 1992, 7/8 March.

9. Irigaray, 354.

10. Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", *Feminisms: An Anthology of Lottery Theory and Criticism*, 340.

of Patrick's "grids" and the disintegration of the dead girl's feet in the fire — the new world of the novella celebrates the power of transgression. Whereas the narrator in "Recording Angel" is terrified of "forgetting" her role within the Symbolic, in the novella Janet, confronted by "the fleetingness of things", self-consciously gives into flux and metamorphosis. She embraces forgetting: "For years she had made herself so flexible that she hardly felt a thing. Forgetting was her greatest skill" (51-52). "You'd be surprised what women can forget" (97).

When Janet looks at her reflected self, her body articulates her own personal collapse of binary oppositions: one hip is higher than the other, and one side of her lip has "a bitter upward twist" ("Cosmo Cosmolino", 52). Rather than use surgery to recapture the self that belongs to linear time, she decides to cut off her hair. Her evocation of another, different time, is celebrated by the transformative image of death-as-absence, as she sees herself reflected in a shop window as a "skull" (57).

This image of decay reverberates throughout the novella. When Ray enters Janet's house, he sees "a pair of lost souls" who are

... already off on the wrong footing with one another, charging down the hall towards the kitchen where perhaps a heel of dry bread awaited them, a scrap of cheap Camembert lying shamefully on its face — what would they care about the building's history? All they saw was roof, walls, floor. This was what they needed. Why ask questions? Why search for more? (64)

Within this air of "general discomfort" (65) lie scattered the relics of the old order: "'There's nothing here but bones,' cried the woman gaily from the kitchen" (66). From these "bones", however, Maxine scavenges "objects or pieces of native timber" (58) to make her own furniture. Here again, the linear past is acknowledged but self-consciously transgressed. "Too outlandish for ordinary houses" ("Cosmo Cosmolino", 58), Maxine's furniture expresses a creator who is "indefinitely 'other' in herself".¹¹ Maxine reintegrates the stuff of linear time within a different time, which is, as Janet laughingly tells Ray, "probably just New Age. A lot of people are into that, these days. They seem to believe in everything all at once" (84).

Despite Janet's dismissive disclaimer, she herself is implicated within the transformative history of "everything all at once". When Maxine gives Janet a pastel drawing, Janet has it "decently mounted and framed; but the framing had not worked out satisfactorily at all, for the picture was so dark and densely layered that once enclosed behind the sheet of glass, it vanished. It completely disappeared" (176). When Janet looks into the picture, all she sees is herself (176). In this image of the painting and of the viewer's response, Garner describes a new, transformative art. Maxine's art is not gazeable-at, produced to hang in a gallery. It does not confirm the authority of a patriarchal gaze. Rather, the woman who looks at it sees within it her own personal reflection; not a painting to be "looked at", it is, in itself, in process. It embodies "the act of looking".

In this way, Garner uses the artistic metaphor to conflate notions of subject and object. For Maxine and Janet, desire is conjoined. Without Maxine, there would be no painting; and without the reflection of Janet's "thought-darkened face", the

11. Irigaray, 354-55.

canvas would be a vacancy "behind the sheet of glass" (176). This expression of a creative *process* boldly transgresses the traditional paradigm — linear and male — of containable, appraisable art on gallery walls, art bounded by perspectives and eyelines, where viewers look with patriarchal assumptions at pictures of female subjects. The art that "belongs" to Maxine and Janet is something shared, with no recognisable form that divides viewer from viewed. While *present* to them both, it is shifting and transformative, resisting regulatory forms. Like the music played by Athena in *The Children's Bach*, this art is for Maxine and Janet intensely personal, valued not for the esteem of others but as an expression of their own presence. While Athena is doomed to play on her own, however, Maxine and Janet have the strength of their mutual act of creation. In "Cosmo Cosmolino", moreover, the two women, pushing through patriarchal homology, share an *act* rather than a fixed vision: like the cradle, the drawing represents something different to them both.

When Ray sees the cradle so beloved of the two women, he feels his own powerlessness: "He urged himself to respond, he stared at it with fierce willpower ... His store of remarks was empty (85). Bereft of the Symbolic with which to contain Maxine's art, Ray hopelessly invokes a traditional masculinist position of control: "... there unrolled, in the form of a dense fog, the idea of himself *looking at art*" (85). But the cradle, and the waiting women, defy this position. Since he cannot reassert his own strength by containing the cradle within the "objective" male gaze, Ray turns instead to contain the women themselves: "For consolation he brought his thoughts to bear on their plainness" (85-86). He then renames them: "*Ducks*, he thought. They were waddling away from him, wagging their smelly tail feathers ..." (86). By renaming the women, Ray finds a familiar means of control: a means by which to oppose their own transformation of the world they occupy with him.

For Ray, death is an ugly memory from which he tries to escape. It is a fixed event in linear time. For the women, however, creativity is self-consciously linked with death and with the cycle of nature. "The fleetingness of things" is not to be feared — it is to be lived with. Hence Maxine sits in the revival meeting after Hawkwind has taken all her money and "flown away", and thinks, "Surely, *surely* they must know that the game was dead. They were its corpse. Nothing they said or did would revive it" (178). Similarly, Janet knows that if she attempts to revive her sexual relationship with Alby, "some appalling and total submission would be demanded of her, a surrender of self with no hope of backtracking" (192). In order to embrace this new, cyclical history, Janet must not turn back and try to revive things which are locked into linear time. To see beyond the linear, you must live with the corpses of things. And into this death/life symbiosis, Garner gleefully inserts Alby's platitude which mocks the whole struggle to negotiate a relationship between memory and forgetting, death and life, presence and absence:

Yep ... I've always thought that real artists don't need to go to church.
The whole process of creation is acted out through them, every day.
That's *my* theory, anyway ... Would there happen to be coffee available,
out there, at all? (194)

As long as coffee is "out there" just like the old days, Alby couldn't care less. Alby does not try grimly to live within linear time, as Ray does; nor does he seek a self-conscious relation to any other history. For Alby, now is all there is, and why ask for more?

As Maxine flies toward "the meniscus of day" (215), she repeats Hawkwind's earlier fake "flight" from the meeting. Hawkwind, a man, has seen the communal psychology of the meeting as a loony scene out of which he can make money. Firmly situated within the world of the Symbolic, his fake "flight" illuminates the difference with which Maxine finally flies away from the Symbolic. In her flight, Maxine abandons the world of linear subjectivity altogether: "I was over: I dropped off her like a split corset: there was no more I" (215). And as Maxine flies above Janet, Ray and Alby, showering them with blossoms, they feel ever more pressingly the rain, the cold, the here-and-now of their own ineluctable subjectivity. "'Come on then,' Janet tells them. 'Come in and choose a room'" (221).

Over the last decade, Helen Garner has celebrated the conventionally commonplace. She focuses on the space designated "female", the detailed structure of accustomed domestic "reality" which men have perhaps colonised without thinking to appropriate. This becomes a space of transformation, where Athena's musical notes — "bad" by any standards of commendable musical achievement — are tossed out "high into the sparkling air";¹² and where little Helen pushes beyond the actuality of horrid medical transformations by working her own transformative magic, watching the faces of her mother and aunt grow "as round and flat as dinner plates, shining above their dark dresses in what remained of the light".¹³ The small angel in "Recording Angel", the vision of death in "A Vigil", and the creative space experienced within Janet's household in "Cosmo Cosmolino", also suggest transformation. They do not change the world, but they suggest new ways in which it may be experienced.

12. Helen Garner, *The Children's Bach*, (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1984), 96.

13. Garner, *Postcards From Surfers*, (Fitzroy: McPhee Gribble, 1985), 40.

With special thanks to Robert Dixon and Gina Mercer for editing drafts of this paper.

HEATHER CAM

The Weasel

His wife sat across the room
unaware of what
her sly husband
was doing in his thoughts
to the hostess, just now freely
embraced in greeting
(he'd managed to insinuate
something carnal, though fleeting,
between this cheek, that cheek—
making casual welcome a claim over property).

This cheek, that cheek—
the cheek! and in her own house!
Ignore it? Or be ridiculous and uppity
as he turned a jostle into a caress,
friendliness into trespass?

For the rest of the evening
he inflicted these covert little alarms,
flattered and flustered her,
brushed her shoulder, her bare arm.
When he moved in, his breath on her neck,
she tried to ignore and deny it—
then suddenly a transgressing finger
weaselled swiftly into her armpit
— vulnerable, private.

A ferret masquerading as a straying digit;
a lecher sneering behind the mask of friend;
and the unpleasant question
had she, by default, invited it?
And where would it all end?

RORY STEELE

It Can't Happen to Me

Jostling lab rats scoot today
Careless round their Nurburgring and
Free until the experimenting hand
Drops down selectively so that we may
In twos mesh our cogs unpenalised, gland
And hips interconnected connive
To surge the virus and drive
Like the clappers perhaps to expand
Commuter odds of nine to five
On the orbital, a steering pin gives way
And ambulances' unmelodic sirens play
Luring spectators in yonderness meaning I've
Yet again proved quite conclusively
That it did not happen to me

RORY STEELE

Walkout

A few friends telephoned today
Guessed me keening round the house
Yes, ironies of permanence are everywhere
Mementoes of Till Death Us Do
Arts that mimic fucking life
Obscenely, like the photographs
Snap-freezing grins assumed just then
Or acts illogical when framed
In dismal interruptuses
Just just outdated, slipped in time
Irony and vanity, slip me biblical
Beneath a temple toppled
Blindly by my strongman
But he walked out free
The children stand there stupidly
Columns that forgot to fall
But I am more or less in bits
These phonecalls advocate and indicate
We're modular today, can put ourselves
Together differently, Hang in!
I hang in different ways, hang up.

It Happened to Mathew Again

It happened to Mathew again the night before his twenty first birthday party. This time it was preceded by the image of a white tiled wall and the sensation of large hands pressing into the base of his back.

When Mathew was six his cousin, Shane, walked across the footpath outside Mathew's uncle's house. The concrete was still wet, having just been paved, and the shape of Shane's shoes was imprinted into the concrete beneath his feet as he walked. Shane's footprints were still imprinted in the concrete outside Mathew's uncle's house on the day of Mathew's 21st birthday party.

When Mathew was nine he put his feet into Shane's footprints in the concrete outside his uncle's house. Mathew's feet matched Shane's footprints perfectly.

"Look," Mathew said to his father, who was standing beside Mathew at the front gate. "The same."

Mathew's father looked at Mathew's feet in Shane's footprints but did not say anything. Mathew's father pushed the gate open and walked up the driveway towards the side door of Mathew's uncle's house. Mathew followed his father up the driveway.

Mathew's uncle was sitting in the kitchen smoking a Craven A cigarette and listening to a horse race when Mathew and his father went inside the house.

Mathew's uncle looked up at Mathew and his father as they came in.

"Hello, brother," Mathew's uncle said to Mathew's father.

Mathew's uncle and father shook hands.

"Just a second," Mathew's uncle said. "I've got a bet on in this race."

"Who are you on?" Mathew's father asked.

"Andree's Folly," Mathew's uncle said.

Mathew listened to the sound of the race commentator's voice on the radio. Mathew liked the sound of racing commentator's voices. He liked the way their voices grew sharper and faster as the race neared the finish. Mathew could tell by the tone of the race commentator's voice on the radio that the race had just begun.

Mathew's uncle looked across at Mathew. "Shane's in his room," Mathew's uncle said.

Mathew did not want to go and talk to his cousin. He knew that Shane would be playing with lego, as he almost always was when Mathew went to his house. Mathew wanted to stay with his father and uncle and listen to horse races and smoke

Craven A cigarettes and talk about man things. Mathew's father and uncle looked down at Mathew as he stayed in the room listening to the horse race. Mathew knew his father and uncle wanted him to go away and talk to Shane.

It happened to Mathew again the night before his 21st birthday party. This time it was preceded by the image of a white tiled wall and the sensation of large hands pressing into the base of his back.

Mathew felt plastic roll around his head, blocking the air from his lungs and pressing tightly against his mouth and eyes. Mathew knew that the plastic was not there, that it had never been there, but the fear rose up in him to a familiar panic that enveloped him like cold air. His penis softened inside his girlfriend, AnnElise. Mathew pushed AnnElise off him.

Mathew looked into the darkness over his head.

He could hear his gasping breath and the rapid pumping of blood through the arteries in his neck.

Mathew closed his eyes.

The plastic was gone.

The panic rolled off him, leaving behind a sick, empty, feeling in his stomach.

"What is it?" AnnElise asked.

"I don't know," Mathew said. "The fear again."

Mathew heard AnnElise roll over onto her side. Mathew wondered if she had turned towards him or away from him.

Mathew opened his eyes and turned his head toward AnnElise. AnnElise was staring at him. She moved her right arm across his body.

"Fear of what?" AnnElise asked.

"I don't know," Mathew said.

"Don't you trust me?" AnnElise asked.

"Yes," Mathew said although he did not understand what AnnElise meant by trust. "It's not you."

Mathew did not know why he was afraid.

"It's O.K." AnnElise said. "I don't mind."

Mathew looked into the darkness over his head. AnnElise rolled onto her back.

"I don't want you to stress over this," AnnElise said. "Because I really don't mind."

Mathew closed his eyes.

"You never used to be afraid," AnnElise said. "Why are you afraid?"

"I don't know," Mathew said. "It's like suffocating."

Silence followed.

Mathew waited for AnnElise to tell him to see somebody about it but she did not.

Mathew fell asleep.

Mathew walked out of his uncle's kitchen as his father and uncle listened to the horse race. Mathew walked through the living room to Shane's closed bedroom door. Mathew knocked on the door.

"Come in," Shane said.

Mathew opened the door and walked into his cousin's bedroom. Shane was sitting on the floor in the middle of his room surrounded by lego blocks. There were several lego men and machines in front of him. Shane was the only boy Mathew's age that Mathew knew who still played with lego and did not barrack for a football team.

"Hello." Mathew said.

Shane looked up at Mathew but did not say anything.

Mathew sat down in front of Shane and looked at the lego men and machines. He was not sure if the machines Shane was making were meant to be trucks or cars. Shane picked up one of the lego machines and placed another block on the front of it making the machine appear disproportionately tall in the front. Shane put the lego machine down, thought for a moment, then picked the machine up and removed the lego block he had just added to the front.

Mathew heard his father and uncle laugh in the kitchen.

Shane put down the lego machine he had in his hand and picked up another one. He placed a lego block on the front section of the machine then instantly removed it and put the machine back down on the floor.

Mathew could feel himself growing more and more irritated with Shane and his lego blocks. He could not understand how Shane could take such an interest in building machines that made no sound, moved only when he pushed them and did not even look realistic.

"Do you want to do something," Mathew asked Shane.

"I am doing something," Shane said.

Shane picked up another lego machine and Mathew had to suppress the urge to smash the machine in Shane's hand.

"Let's go outside," Mathew said. "Let's play kick to kick football."

Shane put down the machine and picked up the same machine he had picked up when Mathew had first come into the room. Shane looked at the machine for a moment then put a lego block on the front, making it look disproportionately tall in the front again. Shane put the machine back on the floor.

"Let's throw a tennis ball around," Mathew said.

"Do you want to see something," Shane asked Mathew.

"See what?" Mathew asked.

Shane reached over to a dressing table to his right and opened the bottom draw. He took out a doll of an American Indian. The Indian had black hair down to the base of its back and a wide grin on its face, exposing rotting white teeth. The doll had a cloth around its waist, extending down to its feet, and a long carving knife gripped tightly in its right hand.

"Watch this," Shane said.

Shane pulled on a string, hidden beneath the Indian's hair, and the doll began to cackle hysterically like the Wicked Witch of the West in the Wizard of Oz. Shane lifted up the cloth around the doll's waist. The doll had a snake-like penis which reached down the length of its legs to its ankles. The doll stopped laughing and Shane pulled on the string again. The doll shrieked with laughter and Shane waved the doll around in front of Mathew's face, the penis dangling in front of his eyes.

Mathew backed away and the doll stopped laughing. Shane pulled the cloth back down over the American Indian's penis and put it back in the bottom drawer of the dressing table.

"I made it myself." Shane said.

Mathew's twenty first birthday party was held at the pub on the corner of the street in which he and AnnElise lived. Mathew's father was friends with the owner so they had use of the pub for free. The pub was called The Three Crowns.

Mathew and AnnElise walked to The Three Crowns half an hour before the party was supposed to begin.

Mathew's parents and uncle were in the kitchen of The Three Crowns preparing food when Mathew and AnnElise arrived.

"Shane's in the upstairs section." Mathew's uncle said after everyone had said hello.

Mathew and AnnElise walked upstairs to the upstairs party room of The Three Crowns. Shane was standing by the window on the far side of the room. He was wearing glasses. Mathew had never seen Shane wearing glasses before.

"Hello," Shane said. "I haven't seen you for a long time."

"No," Mathew said. AnnElise put her right arm around Mathew's waist. "This is AnnElise by the way. AnnElise this is my cousin, Shane."

"Hello," AnnElise said.

"Hello," Shane said.

Mathew looked out the window to a park on the other side of the street. He had no idea what to say to Shane next.

"I heard you won some story competition this year," Shane said to Mathew.

"That's right," Mathew said. "It wasn't much."

Mathew had won \$1000 for writing a story about a boy who believed he was going to give birth to a bird. Mathew did not think it was a very good story.

"I'd like to do something like that," Shane said. Shane pushed his glasses back against his face. "I'd like to be able to ... to be able to say how I feel sometimes."

"I'm not very good," Mathew said. "I'd prefer to be an actor but I'm even worse at that."

"I acted once," Shane said. "In high school."

"Which play were you in?" AnnElise asked. Mathew liked the way AnnElise sounded genuinely interested in people when she asked them questions. He knew that most people liked talking to her.

"I was the soothsayer in Julius Caesar," Shane said.

"Do you like acting?" AnnElise asked.

"No," Shane said. "I get too nervous."

Mathew's father came into the room carrying three glasses of champagne.

"Get you off to an early start," Mathew's father said.

AnnElise laughed.

Mathew and Shane went to the vacant property across the road from Mathew's uncle's house the day after Shane showed Mathew the Red Indian doll he had made. Mathew's parents had gone interstate for the day to play poker machines and had left Mathew at his uncle's house. Mathew's uncle was inside the house watching World of Sport.

Shane and Mathew brought a packet of Craven A cigarettes with them to the vacant property. Shane had bought the cigarettes from the corner store that morning. He told the shopkeeper that he was buying them for his father.

Mathew and Shane smoked behind a tree near the back of the vacant property where they could not be seen from Mathew's uncle's house. Mathew only felt comfortable with Shane when they were smoking. It was the only thing that Shane liked doing that was not also done by six year olds.

Mathew still did not know what to say to Shane but when they were smoking he did not feel as though they had to speak. Smoking gave them something else to do.

Mathew picked up a pile of stones. He began throwing the stones one at a time at a tree on the other side of the property. Shane picked up a pile of stones and began throwing them at the tree too.

By the time Mathew threw his last stone his cigarette had almost burnt out so he took one last drag and butted it out in the ground. Mathew reached over and picked up another pile of stones.

Shane butted his cigarette out in the ground.

Mathew heard the side door of his uncle's house slam shut. He looked around the side of the tree he and Shane were sitting against. He could see his uncle coming down the driveway towards them.

"Hey, you kids," Mathew's uncle said. "It's time for lunch."

"It's only eleven o'clock," Mathew said to himself.

Mathew heard a noise behind him. He looked around and saw Shane climbing over the back fence of the property.

"Shane, where are you going?" Mathew said. "He couldn't have seen us smoking from inside the house." Shane disappeared over the fence.

"You kids." Mathew heard his uncle say. "I know you're back there."

Mathew stood up and walked around the side of the tree so that his uncle could see him.

"Where's Shane," Mathew's uncle asked.

"He went down the street a while ago," Mathew said. Mathew hoped that his uncle had not been able to see Shane climbing over the fence.

"Well you come inside then, anyway." Mathew's uncle said.

Mathew's uncle started walking back up the driveway. Mathew followed his uncle up the driveway and inside the house through the side door.

Mathew first realised that he was drunk at his twenty first birthday party when he was standing by the upstairs window with AnnElise and she asked him what he had been drinking.

"Fizzy pop," Mathew said and laughed the way he always did when he had been drinking champagne.

Mathew looked back inside the room. He could see a mass of people, mostly relatives and friends that he saw only now and again, standing in the room talking in small groups of three and four people.

"I don't have many real friends," Mathew thought, growing suddenly sad. "Besides AnnElise."

He turned back and looked to the park across the street. He could see a group of faint lights in the distance. Mathew wondered if the lights were from cigarettes. He imagined a group of eleven year olds sitting in the park smoking their first cigarette. He knew he had been with Shane, and that he had been younger than eleven, but he could not remember the details of what happened. He could not remember if either of them had coughed the first time they inhaled.

"What are you looking at?" AnnElise asked.

Mathew looked at AnnElise.

"Those lights," he said. He looked back at the park and pointed to where the lights had been but he could no longer see them there.

"What lights?" AnnElise asked.

Mathew looked around the park but could not see the lights anywhere. He was unsure if he had ever really seen them at all.

Mathew's uncle stepped close to Mathew as Mathew walked into the kitchen for lunch, the day after Shane had shown Mathew the American Indian doll with the snake-like penis. Mathew had expected to see food laid out on the kitchen table, the way his mother prepared lunch, but the table was clear.

"You have to have a shower before lunch," Mathew's uncle said.

"I already had one this morning," Mathew said. "At home."

"You've been out in the dirt," Mathew's uncle said. Mathew's uncle put the palm of his hand against Mathew's cheek and firmly closed his fingers around Mathew's face. "You're covered in dirt and you're in my house. Go have a shower and clean yourself off. I'm not having lunch with no dirty grot."

Mathew's uncle pushed Mathew in the face, forcing him a couple of steps in the direction of the bathroom. Mathew stopped himself and looked back at his uncle.

"Go on," Mathew's uncle said. "I don't want to hear no more about it."

Mathew walked into the bathroom and closed the door. He looked at his face in the mirror. He could not see any dirt on his face.

Mathew wondered if Shane had run away because he knew that he would be made to have a shower.

"Hurry up and have your shower," Mathew's uncle called from the kitchen. "I don't want to wait all day for my lunch."

Mathew undressed and turned the hot water tap on in the shower. As he waited for the water to warm up he heard his uncle's footsteps approaching from the kitchen. His uncle's footsteps stopped outside the bathroom door. Mathew waited to hear the footsteps go away but they did not. Mathew saw steam rising up from the shower. He turned the cold water tap on. When the water was warm he stepped into the shower, pulling the plastic shower curtain closed behind him.

It happened to Mathew again on the night of his twenty first birthday party.

He and AnnElise were having sex in their bedroom at three o'clock in the morning. They were both drunk.

There was nothing preceding it this time. No white wall and no sensation of large hands pressing into the base of his back.

The plastic rolled around Mathew's head without warning. He could feel it press tighter and tighter against his face. He felt hands pressing into his head through the plastic. He heard running water and someone laughing.

Mathew's penis softened inside AnnElise and he pushed her off him.

The plastic stayed wrapped around his head. He could feel his breath hot inside his throat.

"What is it?" AnnElise asked. "What's wrong?"

For a moment Mathew saw a blurred face through the plastic, staring down at him. He felt something solid press into his anus.

"Oh, God," Mathew said. "It happened."

"What?" AnnElise asked.

The face vanished. A moment later the plastic rolled away.

Callahan's Bride

Callahan
painted shamrocks on the mailbox
then went at the woods with a backhoe
to give her a lawn
tight around the house like a ring.
From the kitchen window, hands busy with garden
radish and strawberry — bite-sized hearts
he'd examine for imperfections — she watched
the trees sway like bridesmaids
catching at the sun's last flung light.

In the beginning when he was gone
she'd walk the back roads — apple in a pocket
humming in her mouth — stop at the trestle
to wave in his evening train, its five blue cars.

But last October when the fog
dragged its veils along the forest floor,
feverish she went among the trees, greeting one
then another as if pressing cheek to cheek and
they in turn reached out a yellow touch
or brushed her with a chartreuse glove. Two maples
bowed and offered trays of reds, and she,
as if she had to choose, hung in white between them,
startling as birch or a pear tree made of glass.

A Painter Poses

What might have been a flock
of dark flapping parrots
over the church resolves into
leaves imitating parrots
in the moving air.

My eyesight is not good for distance.

I am reminded, for example
of the moving water in the place I call home
looking at that window
high up in the brick wall
round as a porthole
the green stained window.

It strikes me strange, the colour ...
this far inland only the Paterson's
curse breaks the brown.

The brown earth has moved under my feet
sometime before causing this
displacement of the grave marker I
rest my boot on — there seems no
harm in it now.

Actually I was going to visit that ruined
church behind us
Don't look at me like that I know you
know I'm an atheist.

But the fire moves me to investigate
if anything essential has changed
about the structure now the people
have all gone.

Blackened iron sheets from the roof —
there, concentrate on those while I go
I won't be long.

Anyhow, it seems as if those moving clouds
will soon fill the ether with rain
we should take shelter.

KENNETH C STEVEN

Once Before

About Christmas-time we would go there
By the back roads, with fields of geese and a grey snow.
It was flat land, tousled in autumn with red clusters
And long stretches of poplar. The old couple
Were hewn from ash and the blown-down tree of a lost age.
They sat behind windows of blue-cold cloud
Welcomed us with fire and tea, green rooms of holly.
And he would take goose quills in his frayed grasp
Skill ink pens with a knife and tut his pipe.
There would be talk and a looking at old things
The clock in the hall and the skates with their many winters
Curled asleep in a box. Then the dark came
With frost of rough gemstones, the air pinched
With stars and balloons of breath. We had to go
That year and the year that came after
And now I don't know the way back.

CLAYTON HANSEN

Dances at the Hall

Rosy swings in good and close
the intro starts, she takes
a breath and says to my armpit,
giggling, "I don't know this one."

I look and wink, my dancer's wink and
think "I thought you did...",

the pair in front
will save us, but
following a slick too slow,
the oldtimers nod and know
holding walls up — they smile all the same
tramping the circuit,
pops and slips, and
relaxation half way through grips
my legs and I forget the bloke-in-front's pattern.

It's then I notice the bloke-in-front
is watching the bloke-in-front
of him, around, until in a swing I see,
the bloke behind trains his feet
on me,

all the while Rosy glows, and puffs her chest,
half exhaustion
half request — I lead this dance and waltz
my best
dancing at the Hall.

Austerities and Epiphanies: A Note on Fantasy and Repression in Patrick White's "Five-Twenty"

The pages of *The Cockatoos*, Patrick White's second collection of short stories, are littered with ruined epiphanies. In the title story each character interprets the migratory birds as a symbol for an experience of transcendence they neither expect nor feel they deserve. Compelled by years of lovelessness into a bitter and silent marriage, Mick and Olive Davoren begin to develop a new language of tenderness in the presence of their mysterious visitors. The cockatoos appear to offer a glimpse into a world of harmony, order and beauty; but their departure leaves death, silence and aching loneliness in its wake. Meanwhile "The Full Belly" depicts the horror of Greece under German occupation, where villagers make faltering attempts to spiritualise their physical distress through religion, sex, and music. The spiritual isolation enforced upon the individual trapped in a world devoid of grace or redemption is perfectly expressed in the character of Costa Iordanou, the young musician, who is alive to the "austerities" of Bach but unable to grasp the "epiphanies"¹ that Bach's music promises to reveal. The mundane and supramundane worlds touch for a moment and then diverge; denied the aesthetic resolution of a musical epiphany Costa is compelled to find sustenance in his own fantasies of change and renewal.

With its stubborn refusal to resolve the tension between existential austerity and the desire for a transcendent release from the rigours of the human condition, Costa's story functions as a hermeneutic rubric for the collection as a whole. Ensnared by the constrictions of history and language, individuals struggle towards a moment of revelation that will infuse their lives with meaning, only to collapse back amidst the ruins of their dreams. White consistently resists these moments of epiphanic resolution because he wishes to explore the dreamscapes, narrative projections and compensatory fantasies that his characters develop in the absence of a redemptive moment of secular transcendence. Nowhere is the space between austerity and epiphany more tellingly articulated than in "Five-Twenty," a story that charts Ella Natwick's faltering passage from the arid monotony of a fading marriage towards

1. Patrick White, *The Cockatoos* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), 99. All further page references refer to this edition of White's text.

the possibility of erotic release in the arms of a fantasy lover. Forced to care for Royal, her invalid husband, in his declining years, Ella beguiles the time watching the commuters drive home on the Parramatta Road. Gradually her attention is monopolised by one man, the driver of a Holden, and White's tale describes her growing interest in this unremarkable individual, the two visits he pays to her home in the wake of Royal's death, and the tragedy that destroys her domestic idyll and exposes her once more to evanescence and loss. Recounted in these terms, "Five-Twenty" risks approximation to minor suburban drama; but it is rescued from banality by White's deliberate erosion of the boundaries between fantasy and reality. We are not told the source of Ella's attraction to the unnamed driver, and his figure is only tentatively sketched; but as his image mutates in Ella's mind she is left to confront a lifetime of repressed memories and forgotten dreams. This synthesis of dream and reality is then repeated in the melancholy confusion of Ella's twilight reveries, where desire and the repression of desire combine to produce her unstable and contradictory narrative.

White's subtle exploration in "Five-Twenty" of Ella's mutilated fantasies is assisted by his use of free indirect style to create a mode of address indifferently positioned between first and third person narrative positions. Free indirect style is a technique widely employed by Modernist writers because it places the truth-claims of narrative fiction within parentheses, and, in the epistemological gap so produced, enables the writer to focus upon the difficulty of communicating knowledge between minds. In the hands of a writer like Joyce it is used to describe the effects that linguistic incompetence has upon the perception of the phenomenal world. The axiom upon which both *Dubliners* and "Five-Twenty" turn is that our ability to transform our existence is determined by our ability to describe and reimagine our experience. Existential paralysis is therefore, for both writers, an effect of *linguistic* paralysis. "Five-Twenty" describes precisely this tortured relationship between word and world in Ella's doomed attempt to articulate her fantasies and take the first steps into a new life.

By gently refracting the story through Ella's consciousness, White quickly reveals her inability to negotiate the abyss between thought and expression. The opening paragraph, which introduces us to the Natwick's ritual observance of the evening traffic along the Parramatta Road, notes that the stream of cars slowly thickened until it sometimes jammed "solid-like" (169). With this casual phrase, a term of equivalence that threatens to become a simile but lacks any final comparative term, we enter Ella's world. "Like what?," we want to ask. White's point is economically made: the story is about experiences or states of mind for which its witnesses can find no adequate verbal expression. The bestowal of narratorial responsibility upon a character for whom language is an opaque medium gradually opens the text up to multiple ironies. Thus the syntactic confusion of Ella's deference to Royal, "on account of he was more educated", makes an ironic point about the power of education to confer the linguistic competency she sorely lacks. A similar note is struck by her disinclination to rebuke Royal for spitting "because he'd only create if she did" (171), where the stultification engendered by their daily routine is implied by a verb that evokes an effortless spontaneity. Through Ella's verbal infelicities White continually reminds us of the limitations of the account that we are reading; it is apparent in her reference to her "arthritis" and her casual admission that "[i]t was all very well for men, they could manage more of the hard words" (172). Even in these early

moments of the story, White is careful to underline his principle theme: Ella's difficulty in translating experience into language precludes her from the redemptive movement of grace. This becomes grimly apparent in the scene that describes the death of the Chevy driver outside the Natwick's house, an episode which prefigures the collapse of Ella's mysterious visitor at the end of the story. The young man is crushed and unable to speak; his fate is to die within the confines of Ella's narrative, where his last words are buried beneath the typographic monstrosity of "Extreme Unkshun" (171).

Ella's inarticulacy is the dominant theme of the story's opening pages. Even in those moments when she is overcome by an incipient lyricism she manages to keep the feeling at arm's length. Disgusted with her impractical desire to kiss and bite Royal's nose in the moonlight, she proceeds "solidly" (176) to sleep. One assumes she would appreciate the unfussiness of the adjective that governs her rest. Her own explanation for her mental dullness is contradictory: she "hadn't the imagination" to articulate the "thoughts" that swarmed in her mind; but since Royal rebuked her for her "foolishness" in having thoughts at all she concedes they "couldn't have been her own" but must have been "put into her" by some mysterious outside force. The chasm that opens here between intention and denunciation enables White to concentrate our attention upon the theme of repression that gradually dominates the rest of the story and which he uses to interrogate the fantasies Ella constructs to relieve her inner turmoil. This focus upon repression is unavoidable because Ella's personality is constituted by the denial of the libidinal play of the desiring self. It is her refusal to acknowledge the force of the dreams, desires and fantasies that define our modern subjectivity which leaves her damaged and unable to take effective control of her life. We do not need to be reminded of Lacan's dictum that the unconscious is structured like a language to recognise that Ella's inarticulacy and her repression of the economy of desire share a common origin. White underscores this recognition by showing, even in those moments later in the story when Ella begins to elaborate her dream of release, that her fantasies crumble at the point of articulation, relapse into fragmentation when confronted with the conscious demands of narrative coherence.

The twin themes of wordlessness and repressed desire recur in the symbol of the hare-lip "badly sewn, opening and closing" (177) that sends Ella into paroxysms of fear and the images of rebirth that punctuate the text. The most important of these images is, of course, the driver of the Holden, whose daily journey home is absorbed into a fantasy narrative which offers Ella some measure of compensation for a life of fragments and discontinuities. He is only "half" (179) a joke to her: comical because slightly unreal; serious because seriously desired. The Holden driver is in part a creation, a figure who takes on a new identity in her mind, without reason or design. His status as a projection of Ella's unconscious desire is reinforced by her insistence that he reappear in her vision at exactly twenty minutes past five every evening. Against the flow of time, subtly suggested by the chaotic movement of the traffic along the Parramatta Road, the Holden signifies to her a mode of constancy capable of redeeming her hopes and aspirations from the randomness of history. The growing discrepancy in Ella's mind between reality and fantasy is indicated by the "guilt" (181) that sends her scuttling back from her reveries to Royal's sickbed. But her fantasies cannot be so easily assuaged: they reappear in her dream of a man on the path alongside the cinerarias, a vision which recurs like the return of the repressed to such deadly effect at the conclusion of the story.

Ella's dreams of metamorphoses are also suggested in less overt terms. White's confidence in developing his main theme by indirection rather than narrative explanation is demonstrated by his short detours into pastoral, such as the scenes in which Ella escapes from a lifetime of scrupulous devotion to lose herself in the sensuous riot of her garden:

She loved her garden.

The shady side was where she kept her staghorn ferns, and fishbones, and the pots of maidenhair. The water lay sparkling on the maidenhair even in the middle of the day. In the blaze of summer the light at either end of the tunnel was like you were looking through a sheet of yellow cellophane, but as the day shortened, the light developed to a cold, tingling green, which might have made a person nervous who didn't know the tunnel by heart (180).

The garden in "Five-Twenty" has a similar function to the forest in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: it denotes a marginal world, closely linked to the unconscious, in which the normal rules and structures of civil society are temporarily suspended. In this new imaginative domain each value encounters its opposite: water, with its plural association of flux, process and regeneration, sparkles on the "maidenhair," which symbolises innocence and self-enclosure. Ella inhabits the interstate between these two conditions, dreaming of a metamorphosis for which a child is the most visible symbol, while addicted to a life composed of rituals, routines and minor prohibitions. Adrift between the compensations of fantasy and the safety of self-restraint she gazes at life through "a sheet of cellophane", secure within a "tunnel" whose exits have long since been forgotten.

Royal's death releases Ella into a benign narcotic freedom. This release announces itself, appropriately enough, in her riotous desecration of the garden. In an afternoon of Dionysian excess, she dresses herself up in flowers, a suburban Ophelia, and visits the latent violence of her "thoughtless" unconscious upon the visible world:

She couldn't blame anybody, probably only herself. Everything depended on yourself. Take the garden. It was a shambles. She would have liked to protest, but began to cough from running her head against some powdery mildew. She could only blunder at first, like a cow, or runty starved heifer, on breaking into a garden. She had lost her old wiriness. She shambled, snapping dead stems, uprooting. Along the bleached palings there was a fretwork of hollyhock, the brown fur of rotting sunflower. She rushed at a praying mantis, a big pale one, and deliberately broke its back, and was sorry afterwards for what was done so easy and so thoughtless. (185-86)

It is also in Ella's garden, where she has constructed an imaginary world to rival the real, that the "two objects" (187) central to her fantasy converge. By insinuating himself into the tunnel that marks the separation between fantasy and reality, the Holden driver enters Ella's privileged interior space. White is quick to emphasise the correspondence between the realisation of Ella's fantasy existence, implicit in the sexual metaphor of his unexpected entry into her secret "tunnel", and the death of

her former self, signified by her conviction that his wish to use her telephone was "a way to afterwards murder you" (187). Her unconscious yearning for a definitive break with her repressive isolation then erupts for a moment into language as she connects "telephone" with "bed" (188) and begins to utter her nameless desires.

But as White repeatedly demonstrates in his fiction, the reality of repression cannot be so easily evaded. Ella's desire to escape from the constriction of her former life is thwarted by the loss of a language in which desire can be articulated. Brought to a point of crisis at which she must choose between two versions of herself, Ella is overcome by the sheer force of language and the promise of redefinition that it extends. As she wanders with her visitor among the cinerarias, flowers that have become imbued in her mind with eroticism and unrestraint, "[h]er throat became a long palpitating funnel through which the words she expected to use were poured out in a steam of almost formless agonised sound" (190). White's touch is mercilessly exact here: the "funnel" of formless sound that denotes her collapse recalls, through the savage ironies of language, the exitless "tunnel" of her married life with Royal. The entire story turns upon this moment when the slip *out* of language is reconstituted as a linguistic pun. Ella's sudden lurch into the "new language" (190) of tactility cannot therefore be interpreted as a liberating gesture precisely because White relentlessly intertwines the whole question of desire with narrative and story.

The return of Ella's "lover" to her secret garden underlines the inevitable failure of her attempts at metamorphosis. The episode is at once poignant and ironic: poignant because his reappearance, accompanied by the snapping of the "heavily loaded" cinerarias, dramatises her need to break the chains of the bounded self; ironic because the response demanded from her by his gradual slide towards death merely illustrates the abyss that exists within her between desire and expression:

"More air!" she cried. "What you need is air!" hacking at one or two cinerarias which remained erect.

Their sap was stifling, their bristling columns callous.

"Oh! Oh!" she panted. "Oh God! Dear love!" comforting with hands and hair and words.

Words.

While all he could say was, "It's all right."

Or not that at last. He folded his lips into a white seam. His eyes were swimming out of reach. "Eh? Dear-dearest-darl-darling-darling love-love- LOVE?" All the new words still stiff in her mouth, that she had heard so far only from the mouths of actors. (196)

At moments like these White reveals how deeply he has absorbed the lessons of Modernist writers: the struggle of the conscious mind to order its repressed desires into coherence finds expression in a narrative of rigorous delimitations and displacements that has its antecedents in Joyce and Stein. It is fitting that "Five-Twenty" ends, as it began, with paralysis and suspended judgements because the text describes a closed circle within which characters are doomed to repeat the same experiences into a nameless future.

Lives in this twilight world are dominated by repetition and compulsion; they move in the same narrow groove as the "rubber tyred wheels" (179) of Royal's wheelchair. The only escape from repression is fantasy; but fantasy brings with it self-consciousness and the terrifying knowledge of existential isolation. Interviewed in

1973, at a time when the stories collected in *The Cockatoos* were being written, White declared that "everything I write has to be dredged up from the unconscious—which is what makes it such an exhausting and perhaps finally, destructive process My first draft of a novel is the work of intuition and it is a chaos nobody but myself could resolve".² His achievement in "Five-Twenty" is to discover, in the tortured figure of Ella Natwick, a character who conveys the destructive force of the unconscious unable to translate its desires into expressive form, as she waits for a vision of transcendence beside a pot of communion coffee that is never served.

2. Thelma Herring and G A Wilkes, "A Conversation with Patrick White", *Southerly* 33, (2) 1973, 139.

The Woman Who Turned Into a Lizard

She stood before the bathroom mirror and slowly turned her face away to the left, eyes sliding around as her gaze remained fastened on the spot just below her right ear. There, faintly visible, was a patch of scaly skin which extended from her ear to the hollow of her neck. The skin had a silvery sheen, with flashes of blue and red and green. At first she thought it was a trick of the light, a segment of rainbow thrown from the bevelled edge of the mirror. Gently she stroked the skin with her fingertips. No, it was real. Not a trick of the light. It had the exact texture she expected in a new growth of scales — slightly rough and fragile. Tentative.

She decided to ignore it. Her only concession was to take cooler showers, in case it was the warm water that brought on the "rash". But the cool water left her shivering and the patch of scaly skin continued to develop so she took to turning the hot tap full on so as to fill the room with steam, hiding her reflection in the mirror.

Scaly patches began to appear on other parts of her body. The knuckles of her fingers and the backs of her hands glittered and gleamed as the faint tracery of scales grew. The skin on her knees and down the front of her shins, the tops of her toes and the arch of her foot exhibited the rainbow sheen that heralded the new growth.

She avoided looking at herself as she dressed, sliding into her clothes with her gaze averted, staring at the wall or out the window, ignoring her body. But the day came when her glance got away from her and slid down to her belly; to the wide, lateral scales that glowed a golden colour with a pearly tinge.

Trembling, she stripped and stood before her mirror. The sun slanted through the lace on the window and her body gleamed and twinkled in the subdued light. She was covered from her forehead to the soles of her feet with a fine reptilian skin whose scales glowed red and gold and blue and green.

She turned this way and that, admiring the play of light over her iridescent body. What is happening to me, she wondered.

Engrossed in this transformation, she rose each day and studied her image in the mirror, eager to see what changes had been rung in the night. She began to lose body hair. First on her legs and arms; then the secret curves beneath arm and over the pubis grew smooth and hairless. Handfuls fell away from her head, floating in the foamy shampoo. She slicked down what was left of her long dark hair and made an appointment with her hairdresser.

"A moisturiser and massage are recommended, love," he tutted. He also

suggested a perm for "body and curl. A bit of colour might help, too," he added.

"No," she whispered. "Cut it off. The same length all over."

The hairdresser's eyebrows registered disapproval, almost vanishing beneath his elegantly tumbled fringe. "Well!" he exhaled, then recovered his professional aplomb. "What length do you want it?"

"A child's eyelash."

He did as she asked, wielding the scissors in flashing snips and snaps around her head, smoothing and combing. Gradually the elegant shape of her head appeared and she was satisfied. "Yes — yes — that is what I want — thank you," she said. His frightened eyes avoided meeting her steady gaze in the mirror and she felt a pang of sorrow. She gave him a big tip because she knew it was the last time she would see him.

For a week she smoothed the fine down on her head with the palms of her hands, which had remained pink and soft and human. Then, one day, the tracery of scales began to faintly overlay the lifelines, child and marriage lines that had been clasped in the palms of her hands all these years. That morning she shaved her head and stood stroking the smooth scalp with the tips of her fingernails, enjoying the shape of her skull and the texture of the scales that covered it.

Now she could see that her ears had disappeared. Where each had sat so neatly on her head, there was an indentation that curved around to a neat lip, forming a little opening. Through these, sounds curled into her inner ear. She found that she could no longer bear some tones; the radio and television were silenced, she handled dishes and cutlery gently and turned the tap water to a soft dribble.

But there was a compensation. She was now delicately attuned to the sibilant whisper of grass and leaf, the twitch and twitter of insect wing, rasp of mouse toenail and whisper of butterfly antennae. She needed this new awareness of sound as her diet changed. Insects and tiny rodents were her food now. She prowled the house searching for giant cockroaches, scratched through the cupboards for silverfish. Her cat took a good look at her as she snatched a pink-eared mouse from under his paw and ran away, scraping his belly as he scrambled under the fence.

Her eyes grew larger and changed from brown to agate yellow. In the centre was a black slit that opened wide; the round pupil had vanished. Her eyelids felt thicker and it took longer for them to cover her eyes. She enjoyed the sensual movement of lid over eyeball and sat in the sun for hours, closing her eyes to the light and then slowly opening them, losing herself in the gentle slide of membrane over membrane, savouring the closing of the slit as it adjusted to the light.

Eating the light. This is what she called this slow opening and closing to the sun's rays. Her eyes consumed the light, stored it behind their golden glow and sent it down her backbone and into her body. She lay on the bricks of the patio soaking up the sun, turning the clear light into rainbow scales. Sunlight and the occasional insect were all the nourishment she needed. She was not hungry in the old way. She stuck to the insects and rodents and the sunlight and rested often, growing thinner, more angular; her bones and tendons bold beneath the iridescent scales.

Out of the sunlight, in the cool dimness of her home, the core temperature of her body cooled, the inertia of a slowed blood flow dragged at her. Moving as if through water, she retreated to her darkened bedroom, testing the still air with her tongue, searching the muted green light beyond the blinds with her golden eyes. She lay herself gently on the bed and without changing position, without uttering one

sound, sank into stillness. This was not a deep sleep. She did not dream while in this state; she hung suspended in a void. It was a form of non-waking, a cessation of movement during which her heart beat slower and slower, her mind wound down, her ears closed to all sounds, all sensory input was cut off and her body grew cool.

When she woke, still in the same position, she was so chilled that it took a huge effort to drag her body off the bed. She felt thick and heavy, had no control and her progress through the house was a bumbling, ricocheting dance that saw her bouncing off walls, bookshelves, tables, the piano, door jambs — shivering and shaking her way to the mirror in the bathroom where she gripped the sink and stared at her image.

"I am being transformed," she whispered. "Transformed."

The changes did not so much frighten as astonish her. "You are beautiful," she told her reflection and flicked out her blue tongue. It rose from her azure throat and mouth like the stamen of an exotic flower; her blue lips caressed the long organ as it sank back and disappeared. She took great delight in her tongue, relishing the sensitivity of its tip, which she rested in a gentle kiss on her reflection in the glass.

But this loving acceptance of the transformation did not extend to those few who shared her life. First to go was the cat. The friend from two doors down who offered to adopt the beast when she found it cowering outside her door, flinched away from the blue tongue. "I can see you are not well," she gasped, wringing her hands. "I'll keep the cat until you are better," and she fled down the footpath.

This solved the problem of the signora in the shop at the corner. Until the cat slid under the fence, the only shopping she needed to do was for him, to buy his tins of food. For the weekly excursion to the shop, she had taken to wearing long sleeves, a high-necked shirt, a wide brimmed hat and a scarf. She slithered down the street and around the corner and into the shop, looking at no-one and willing no-one to look at her, but one day she caught the old signora's glance and watched the woman quickly cross herself. That swift gesture across a perpetually mourning breast stopped her in her tracks. Was this transformation an evil thing? She flicked her blue tongue in exasperation; the signora blanched and crossed herself twice in a row.

That was the end to the shopping expeditions. She rang her order to the son of the signora, left money under a rock balanced on the post box and waited behind the door until he left before she crept out to bring in the few tins of cat food.

Mr Cool brought his own food when he came to visit. He had a name but early on, before the transformation, she began to call him Mr Cool and his real name slipped away; she left it that way. It was easier.

She wondered in a vague way if Mr Cool was the cause of the reptilian transformation. She had been drawn to him by the tremendous warmth of his body. They did not speak much and when they did, not much was said. He disappeared from her life from time to time and then came back and always, she had welcomed that warmth.

Maybe it was something chemical between her and Mr Cool that was bringing about the change. Perhaps the heat of his body, which she so desired and enjoyed, was too much. Perhaps it had robbed her of her own inner warmth so that now she was growing cooler and cooler, changing from a warm mammalian state to that of a reptile, becoming a creature that only the sun could warm, turning into a lizard.

She knew that Mr Cool noticed the change in her. As the pearly golden scales crept up over her chest, her full breasts grew smaller and finally disappeared. He

commented on this. "You are much too thin," he said. Where are you? his hands pleaded as they stroked the golden scales. He ate the food she cooked for him, looking down at his plate, sparing not so much as a glance at the bowl of crisp insects on the table before her. There were pauses in the rhythm of their lovemaking as he ran his hands over her body and his fingertips met the scales. He did not seem to mind her long tongue and in the dark, she knew that he could not see that it was blue. He accepted the smooth head, the ear holes without a murmur.

But then she began to grow a tail. In her dark bed, Mr Cool quivered with shock when his hand encountered the rounded point that was, in the beginning, only an extension of her tailbone. The tight seal he maintained on his emotions broke; he swore as he reached out and turned on the light. She waited for the slits in her golden eyes to narrow; for his face to come into focus.

It was red, cheeks quivering, a string of spittle grew from his tongue. He forced her over on her stomach and stroked the tail, groaning to himself.

"Please! Something is happening ... I don't understand," she whispered but her blue tongue lost its grip and failed to shape the round vowels, missed the growl of consonant. Her statement or plea, she was not sure which, emerged as a long slithery murmur which was absorbed by the pillow as Mr Cool entered her violently from behind.

They had sex again and again; Mr Cool panting and gasping, thrusting into her mightily. She dug her long nails into his skin, wound her tongue around his neck and he cursed her. At last he collapsed and fell instantly asleep, clasping her tightly with his arms and legs as he fought a dream, growling deep in his throat.

The next morning she dragged a long skirt out from the back of the wardrobe but in the night, the tail had grown so long that the tip of it showed below the hem.

Mr Cool was aghast. "What is it? What have you done? What will it do to me?"

"Nothing," she told him. "No-one has to die."

"I'm leaving," said Mr Cool.

"Good. Go. Get out," she hissed, lashing at him with her tongue.

Maybe, she thought, maybe if Mr Cool takes his impacted anger away with him, the reptilian presence which was permeating her body would slow, cease altogether and she would be left in peace.

"Go," she hissed after him and he moved swiftly through her house, storming from room to room, thundering along the dim hallway and clattering down the stairs. She followed, tracking him to the front door which closed loudly behind him. There she clung to the wood, nails gripping as she pressed her ear hole against the door, waiting for the stutter of his car motor to kick into life and bear him away.

At last there was only silence on the other side of her door.

She crawled on her opalescent belly through the house to her bed, where she drew back the doona to expose the vast smooth sheet. "Ah," she breathed around her blue tongue. "Ah space, cool space." She slid out of the dragging skirt and lowered herself onto the sheet, her rainbow scales rasping as she turned and turned, smoothing a cool nest.

"Goodbye, goodbye," the blue tongue hissed, lapping the azure depths of her mouth, testing the quiet air in the empty room. "Goodbye, Mr Cool," she crooned. "Goodbye, goodbye, you were too hot a flame in my life," and her soft chitter of a laugh slid through the lace curtains.

She turned and stretched and her tail drooped over the edge of the bed, its tip

picking up a tuft of lint from the carpet. She dragged it back with a clawed hand and sighed the tongue in and out. "Now there is room for my tail on the bed, now that he has gone."

The long, slender tail curled around her in a graceful arc. Her golden eyes slowly closed; first the left lid sliding down, then the right. The tongue ventured out once more and its tip stroked the pillow where Mr Cool's head had lain. She sank into her dreamless torpor as the muted sunlight glittered on her rainbow scales.

DALE HARCOMBE

Home's Kid *for Glenn*

This time I know
I will never see him again.
For a time he played the game,
like a child experimenting with blocks,
building towers and fortresses,
but never bridges.
Bridges are hard
Invariably his feet would slip,
before he found
the acceptance parents had denied
and other children refused him.
Acceptance he couldn't recognize
even when it came, like waves
gentling in his life.
Institutions, foster-homes,
he knew them all.
Fourteen going on ninety.
Knowledge gleamed in his eyes.
Though he has since been
swept out of reach,
particles of sand cling and
memories are water-cold companions.

SUE MOSS

pidgin pieta

dis pella michelangelo
emi mekim face bilong meri
in hard kind stone
emi kallim marble
ghost e hide insait long en
face bilong white pella meri emi kam out
strange pella look
not sad not happy to mus

on lap bilong en dis pella man
oli kallim jesus
emi picannini bilong en
dis pella man emi no inap hear
balus long taim bilong sun kum up
emi no tok tok
no sing sing
no mekim picannini
emi dai pinis

dis pella white pella meri
emi no krai krai
emi look long nara pella place
strong pella legs bilong en
holdim weight
bilong picannini bilong en
emi wearem lap lap
oli kallim jesus

how e know
dis pella michelangelo
long mekim face bilong meri
some pella man oli tokim long
michalengelo emi no laik
meri to mus

meri: woman
picannini: child
balus: bird

GRAHAM ROWLANDS

Unopened Poppies

Separate the unopened poppy buds
from the flouncing poppies
& arrange them in a vase.
Instant Giacometti. Only olive.
Hairy earmuffs on hairy stems or
tiny microphones on twisted wire
they could be victims of
radiation or liquid nitrogen,
could be the shape of a virus
enlarged a million times or
walking sticks to help gnomes
waiting for elective surgery

until a muff-full or a mike-full
or a bud-full of crushed petals
opens with a motherhood statement
in orange or saffron or pink.

Fireworks

There's a blackness in this sky of Hiroshige
that can only be entered briefly — an arc
of fireworks, a bursting of little stars

right over our fishing boats. Lanterns
of paper swing in the breeze. Soon the black
night closes over. Pride lasts an hour

and the long darkness forever. A bridge
spans the river, but it too is dark,
a blacker blackness, and may lead nowhere

but to a vaster dark. Or, who knows, to light
abundant, lost green returned? The great sage
Laotze assures us we can find in evil good

if we are good enough, and hear truth
in the words of liars — those who surround us —
if we ourselves are true. And it is in

the wordless work, this flash of fire, brief-
bursting sparks soon cooled in Edo waters
that we learn hope anew. Some workman meant

with dazzling stars to banish plague, famine,
also war — and yet those cinders cooled, soon ash
on waters just as once the fireworks of my youth

fell on the felt cloche hat of my abandoned mother
as we sat on a park bench watching, hoping, waiting
to learn that blackest night is but a spill of ink.

The Use of Burning Swans: the South African background to an 'iconoclastic' language

This text was prompted by the uninformed and dismissive critical response to *Burning Swans*, my first volume of poetry.

For writers who work in a culture different from the one which formed their languages and values it is difficult to communicate without the setbacks of misunderstanding and its counter in repeated self-legitimation. I usually hope that readers can be responsible for their own approach to the work. Ideally, as a poet I would like to say nothing except poems, yet I realise that an audience's reception is a result of their knowledge and context. I made the problem of my work more difficult through my use of the Afrikaans poetry tradition and its influences. Most of the readers of *Burning Swans* will not be familiar with the political subtleties of Afrikaans poets like Eugene N. Marias, Ingrid Jonker, Uys Krige or Breyten Breytenbach, nor of my development of their issues, so I have chosen not to consider my relationship to a "white" South African tradition.¹ Instead I have tried to sketch out my situation as an english-speaking "white" and my response as a poet to the painful heritage of my African birthplace.

Some years ago I read a front page article in this country's national newspaper that stated that South Africa was a drama, a morality play for the Western world. Keeping this in mind, let's say there are two ways to consider Apartheid.

The first way, the outside view, is that Apartheid was a government's policy. It was the Afrikaaner nationalists' response to the economic and cultural crisis that they believed would be caused if the exploited workers were to achieve political rights which would enable them to challenge those people in power. This simple, practical Apartheid was a system of discrimination which enhanced the operation of colonial exploitation by enforcing race-specific exploitation. The most basic intention of Apartheid was to give the Afrikaaners, who otherwise would have been in a situation similar to that of the "non-whites", economic and cultural distinction. The slogan "Ons Land Ons Taal" ("Our Land Our Language") epitomises the Afrikaaner

1. For a comprehensive introduction to the Afrikaans dissident tradition with a particular emphasis on poetry see Jack Cope's *The Adversary Within: Dissident Writers in Afrikaans* (London, Rex Collings, 1982).

nationalists' combination of belonging and meaning, of place and language. Their Land Their Language was an attempt to form a nation out of disparate Afrikaaner factions. For all those people who were not of the *Volk* (Nation), Apartheid was the policy that affected them. English-speaking "whites", who dominated the private sector, often felt themselves to be second-class citizens (although in a system that must have had at least five classes). The english-speaking "whites" developed a belief in the future of their being in other countries. Unlike the Afrikaaner, the first "white" tribe of Africa, the first Europeans to claim African soil and language in a single breath, the other "whites" were not of the colonial school that settles, but of the school that is always ready to return to what they suppose is home. These other "whites" had a culture of possessions, rather than one of land and language, so in theory their home could almost be anywhere. They were not obligated to Apartheid. From their point of view, Apartheid was advantageous, albeit unnecessary (for its conveniences could have been contrived in other, more "english" ways), and its advantages were effortless: the insecure, officious Afrikaaner enacted the discriminatory laws while the capitalistic english-speaker was the economic beneficiary. Between these two there was an obvious animosity. The one called the other "Dutchman" or "Boer", while the touché was "rooinek" (redneck), "Engelse" (english).

The other way of viewing Apartheid is the inside view. From the inside, Apartheid was a belief about the world — an outcome of the theology of Genesis, except that in this Eden people as well as animals were subjected to Adam's rule. To believe in this world-view is to see Apartheid as a fair set of laws which necessarily differentiate between various types of humans in the same way that zoological taxonomies divide types of creatures from one another. As this view is theological and assumed to be divinely sanctioned, criticism of its logical incoherence or empirical blindness couldn't counter it.

Together the inside and the outside view of Apartheid convolute, giving the "white" the impression of the policy's inevitability. To the Afrikaaner nationalist, questioning Apartheid would have been like asking for God's signature. Whereas for the english-speaking capitalist, Apartheid was as crucial to their belief as the myth of the potential for unlimited growth.

Before the young "white" english-speaking ex-South African male I call myself could even open his mouth to speak, I had to decide how Apartheid had formed me. If I didn't, I would have to ignore the pain of my past and participate in a dishonestly naturalised present. I asked myself: Can I kill for a government whose beliefs only represent mine in so far as I am a distortion, a human-shaped space trained for green and blood, a mindless conscript? By not speaking, am I being complicit with behaviours many call "evil"? Doesn't that make me evil? Does Africa have anything to do with me? What language do I have? Am I "human"?

Australians have a phrase that's thought to summarise these doubts: "white guilt". As a long-winded, and paradoxically mute, (ex)-"white" I was forced to realise that guilt is a phenomenon caused by reflection. To look into the mirror and see a non-believer is to realise the emptiness encouraged by Apartheid.

Most Afrikaaners made the transition to the New South Africa by admitting that they were inside Apartheid. They confessed. They said they believed it was the best form of government. They were proven wrong by history. They now knew they were wrong. And they apologised. This is mostly credible. Besides, is it reasonable to blame the people said to be represented by a political party for the party's policies

and methods? How accountable are Australian people for Aboriginal deaths in custody? How can one legitimise a loud "Yes"? The Afrikaaners had the strangely good fortune of believing in Apartheid. They could be forgiven. The english-speaking "whites" couldn't blame their moral bankruptcy on a system that was culturally and religiously sanctioned. Most of these "whites" had permitted the system. Some had protested against it, but with varying degrees of conviction. Those english-speaking "whites" who admitted to not believing in Apartheid, who, either through insecurity, apathy or duplicity, did nothing to express their lack of faith in the A word had their sense of humanity, of ethics, invalidated in the eyes of the world. The voice of the outside world would accuse these people of being pathetically evil.

Before Mandela was released, most "white" immigrants were ashamed. Many tried to lose their accents as soon as possible. When asked about the politics of their ex-country, their problematic "place of origin", they would sadly shrug.

Then, when Mandela was released, they flowered into full humans. They could speak. They were tearful. People who weren't from that country at the point of Africa no longer regarded them as moral lepers. The expression on those people's faces could be said to have been a mixture of surprise at the "white" South Africans' joyful innocence and embarrassment at their pallid naivety. The "whites" couldn't fully explain their joy, their freedom. To most of them, the moment of Mandela's release was a respite from the constant fear of their society and its psychology. As "white" South Africans in little rooms scattered all around this globe watched the World's Most Famous Political Prisoner take his careful, graceful, dignified, not-so-easy-but-finally-rightful steps to freedom, they almost forgot that for twenty-seven years the Image of his face and the mention of his Name wasn't permitted in that country. They forgot that this profound human was the same person certain Afrikaaners had called "the anti-Christ". Most people didn't know what to expect, nor what to make, of that moment. In spite of all these problems, one fact was clear — more people in South Africa felt like people, felt fully human, than ever before.

As a "white" english-speaking South African in Australia, I felt that I had been returned to life. The demonic pain and doubt that had whispered in the ear of my prior existence suddenly had the presence of a ghost. If I was to turn from being nearly dead to being meaningful I knew I would have to learn how to speak. Previously my state of ambivalence had been sufficient to prevent me from being simply incorporated into the Apartheid system. The rapidly developing culture of optimism in the New South Africa was foreign to me. So I turned to my adopted country where I could see many images which reminded me of the country of my birth. There were gumtrees and *fynbos* (coastal shrub) and deserts, mines, dispossessed people, "whites" cringing culturally, deceitful entrepreneurs, ignorant politicians. In a mentality of catharsis, as a gesture towards a mind-space different from the one in which I had grown up, as a "white" I decided to use what I had learnt under the reign of Apartheid and communicate those insights to Australians.

Being uncomfortable in Australian english, South African english and Afrikaans, I only read translations. All voices were too loud for me. Especially my own. Not being able to speak of the landscape or through social conventions because I lacked a familiarity with humans, I searched for love in the faces of vague women and for symbolic fires in their limbs. I was yet to realise that the fires of "controlled burns"

and "necklacings" weren't symbolic. They are tools, processes ... I constructed hermetic personal languages, languages of images, languages in which I could attempt to speak about my selfish loss. As a poet I felt that I had no moral rights. Hurtfully, almost everyone agreed with me about this, though they didn't seem to know why. I saw that Australian capitalism is a lot like Apartheid, but without the blatant legislation. I also saw that relations between Australian men and women were close to U.S. consumer promiscuity. Most of the time I couldn't speak I wasn't sure why.

To enable me to speak as a human I developed three systemic histories in my book *Burning Swans: Afrikaans, women and ambiguous images*.

Afrikaans. My use of Afrikaans was intended to involve the political. As an english-speaker, my relation to Afrikaans didn't seem vastly different from that affecting "black" Africans. For many Afrikaans was enforced. Usually I was subjected to it when I was addressed as a "white". The reasons for, and the effects of, the english-speakers' and the "blacks'" subjugation were significantly different. Speaking for myself, in my usage of the Afrikaans language I was always consciously alien. Afrikaans was the tongue of those who officially contrived social positions within the country. Its kind of alienation was such that it reinforced one's remove from the soil. Through this mode of subjugation the "black" was intended to feel apart from the country because he or she didn't have the conjunction of *Land* and *Taal* which, in the narrow vision of the Afrikaaner government, would have allowed that "black" to be an Afrikaaner, that is, by a spiteful trick of the language of current power, to be named "an African". The english-speaker was in a similar position. But the condition of the english-speaker was that he didn't have an African language prior to Afrikaans and so it wasn't necessary for the alienating effect of Afrikaans to be exercised upon him as he was neither attached to the land, historically or as menial worker, nor to any language which would allow a tangible reference to that earth. If he used an indigenous language, he would be considered African and hence would lose the distinction between European and African which was essential to the colonial mentality. If he used Afrikaans, the advantage of allowing a distance between the "english" capitalist and the officious Afrikaaner would collapse, resulting in the "english" person being modelled after the Afrikaaner (-African).

All this talk has been in variations of the abstract. In spoken reality — by that I mean in the pragmatics of everyday speech — the english that english-speaking South Africans use was already Africanized and Afriaanified. There are influences from Portuguese, Khoikhoi, Italian, Sotho, Lebanese, Malay, Zulu, German, Xhosa, San and I don't know what else They are words on the border of formal South African english. Those english-speakers who thought they could transplant themselves from their native country to somewhere that would transform them into Europeans soon discovered that their words were like weeds. No matter where those "whites" were, their struggle was still that of the European gardener in Africa. To me, the benefit of this hybridised South African english was that it was like a collection of seeds. It wasn't the pretentious and devious Queen's English of imperialism. It was just as wild, incomprehensible and telling as a healthy language. One difference though, it was sick with Apartheid. Just like Afrikaans it had picked up the Arabic word "kaffir" and used breath to plant it as "most hated one".

"Kaffir" was the word most frequently used to indicate the Abyss of non-belief. It placed the person so named in relation to a belief system. It placed them within

the system, as mute objects. The person who was called "kaffir" was (meta-)physically excluded and regarded as less than human. Belief in Apartheid required a belief in the metaphysical system in which God was boss, the Afrikaaner his middleman and the "kaffir" their beast of burden. Afrikaans was the whip the Lord invented for the self-flagellating overseers and their slaves. Within this scheme the English-speaker was incongruous (land-owner, investor?). The morality that was produced by the Protestant theology which the Afrikaaners had transformed from an European ethic to an African politic created a situation wherein Apartheid gave the illusion of being absolutely necessary. This religious sensation is the most intimate experience of the inside of Apartheid. I think people existed in this belief in the same way that they exist within a language.

My task as a "poet" was to attempt to formulate a voice by listening to the disturbing echoes of my synthetic speech. My listening was an investigation of stratas of pain and history. The listening was a slender, slender hope — that in the rumble of an apocalyptic, deceiving, self-serving voice the throat's flesh could be heard and the tongue's gentle, animal-like rasping could be remembered. It's imperative to recognise that what took place was not intended to be an existential experiment. It wasn't an urge to discover the truth of myself for myself (yet in part it might have become that); rather my hope was to discover how I had become myself through others and call that my truth-seeking's object. I was forced to confront the fact that as a "white" South African emigré who recognised his own moral, historical and ontological vacuity I had no claim to universal human rights or moral imperatives, or even the right to the ear of people who weren't in a similar predicament to me. I felt I was compelled to be empty. To become empty. I was unwilling to become anything else until I could understand my human responsibilities. I suppose one could say that deep down I wanted to be entirely honest.

Women. To me it seems that loving copulation is the situation during which persons conclusively embody a belief system. Confusing love with copulation is a way of clouding the difference between the metaphysical world of concepts and the physical world of the flesh. The self/other mental dichotomy is interlaced with mysterious biology. Through sex and love I thought I could empty myself of politics, religion and ethics and thereby exist within the maternal epiphany named Woman. By being a transparent mind, I thought I could witness my own snakey biology and cede my experience's skin. The vision of a lone man witnessing himself with a questionable erection is a blink countering his mirror-image. That witnessed body is the insight of a monad waiting for meaning, looking for the fecund world.

Following this line of thought, the confrontation of lover and beloved becomes a metaphor for the moment of change, of revolution, in the flow of History. My belief was that if a physical-metaphysical confrontation could be enacted ahistorically, by recourse to the unconscious awarenesses of biology, then the problems of history could be resolved by regarding them as problems somehow related to the ecological. At one point it was my aim to repeatedly write the same poem, to have "love" as the varying dynamic between the fundamental symbols of woman and man. I wanted to write under the aegis of the classical Sanskrit poems whose work's value was not the subject but about the subject's details. They used those connotations in such a way that the subject's historical moment was exemplified and recorded.

As love and sex are simultaneously personal moments and socially mediated

experiences, they form a locus which can facilitate the reconstruction of moral values. Those values which are essential to a healthy relationship are diverse and impossible to adequately define. They are beyond verbal definitions, yet, despite the difficulties of their elucidation, their languages (of looks, sounds, touches, moods, attitudes, flowers ...) are specific. Their nature is paradoxical in that its messages may not be consciously understood, or even recognised, by the people concerned. In using the so-called personal as a locus for an investigation of values I hoped to find languages that were unaffected by coercion. Love I saw as an inclusive system, a belief system sans exploitive content, while sex could be regarded as a process of demarcation.

Ambiguous images. That love and sex are understood and manipulated in a wide range of ways, not only by individuals but also by cultures, soon became apparent to me in the course of my accounts. My use of the image that is intentionally ambiguous was necessitated by psychological crisis. Symbols without agreed-upon meanings were objects in a free area. They made cross-cultural references possible. Instead of a symbol being concretely its meaning as defined within a culture, in many instances it was possible to decontextualise and reduce the richly symbolic image to its rough, physical object. This is part of the process of defamiliarisation and is the weakness of translation. Often it's the effect of what's called "culture shock". In this situation, alienation is frightening clarity. The locale of alienation is also space, space to move, to breathe. The reader's distance from the object's context, the reader's struggle in comprehension, seems to focus attention on two aspects/elements of the object.

Firstly, the image is considered. How is that image real? How is that image the object? The reader is to question the presumptions which permit and prevent objects from becoming images. The viewer must become conscious that if they dismiss an image (for example, of lovers as meat) they are invalidating a particular kind of conceptualisation. If, on the other hand, the reader apprehends the apparent congruities and incongruities between the images, and starts to realise that the similarity-dissimilarity of objects are the result of subtle interactions of physicalities and epistemological systems, then the experience of investigating the images become a discovery of prejudices and arguments.

The second issue of the image is the question of physical fact. What is occurring between the knowledge of an object and one's physiological experience of it? One could state that the demarcation between knowledge and perception is too fine to investigate in this way. Perhaps. I take the view that any means of differentiation between types of thought is insightful if the strident physicality generally regarded as "mood" is to be understood. The ease with which a person can move from thinking ideologically to acting violently seems to have its source in behaviours that have specific relations to specific images. Questioning the specific is very useful.

Questioning the correlation of languages, their objects and their concepts by localising their particular aspects not only makes it clear that languages are continually integrating and involving one another. It also makes it apparent that there are areas especially appropriate to certain languages, areas which may only be used when the involved thinker-perceiver forgoes the universalising tendency latent in much translation and becomes aware of the limits, differences, similarities and values of the various languages.

This I consider useful and healthy iconoclasm.

Amanda's Flowers

I've never chosen flowers for a funeral before. I stand outside Fahey's Flowers and feel overwhelmed by the choice and the task. I'm sure there are conventions for funeral flowers but I don't know them and Amanda wouldn't care. I mean she wouldn't have cared when she was alive, though of course she didn't need them then. I suppose she doesn't care about much at all now, but that's hard to believe.

I have waited for Amanda at this florist's so often that part of me expects to see her walk out the door chattering about sweet little cornflowers or something. We used to come here so often that the florist knows us. Last time I was here Mrs Fahey said she would give Amanda a job one day. That'll never happen now.

There are so many things you'll never do, never know, Amanda. You were only twenty-three, the same as me. It's too young to die.

Carnations

Amanda often brought carnations home. Once they were large apricot-coloured ones. "Look, you two," she said, "Aren't they gorgeous? They'll brighten the place up."

Claire and I got inspired too, and searched the house for something to use as a vase. While Amanda carefully arranged the carnations in a honey jar, she pointed out the beauty of their colour, shape, perfume and so on and told us that people who didn't like carnations were snobs, so prejudiced they couldn't see properly.

Then she apologised for not having time to do her share of the housework, and rushed out the door with her latest boyfriend. Claire muttered, "It's all very well brightening the place up, what about cleaning it up?"

"I don't mind," I said. "I like the flowers and I never think to buy any. And at least if we clean the furniture stays intact, and if *we* wash the clothes don't change colour."

Claire grinned and added, "And at least if *we* cook we get something edible before midnight. Amanda's so undomesticated it's funny."

That's how I'll try to remember you, Amanda. Always happy, busy, and carefree to the point of carelessness. Not the ideal person to share a house with, but neither were we. It was the first time away from home for all of us.

Daffodils

The first time I visited Amanda in hospital I took her daffodils. "They're lovely," said Amanda, as I knew she would, "Bright and cheerful — just what you need in this place."

She smiled as she held them and admired them close up. She couldn't sit up comfortably so I arranged them according to her instructions. Then I put them on the shelf where she could see them without moving her head. "They look great," she said, "worth going to hospital for."

She laughed, but I didn't.

As I turned towards her I stopped to look at the elaborate bouquet near her bed. "They're from Frank," she said. "He's promised me a holiday in Queensland to make up for this."

I wanted to ask her about Frank but she looked groggy so I let her fall asleep.

I felt so sad seeing you lying there pretending it was nothing. I felt awful because I didn't know what to do. I had all this training, all this knowledge, but I couldn't help my friend.

The Rose

I glimpsed Amanda as we pushed through a crowded restaurant. I turned to look at her but I didn't go up to say hello. She was with Frank. She was smiling lovingly at Frank. She didn't see me. Fortunately Frank didn't see me either. He had his back to me but it was unmistakably Frank. Frank — short for Frankenstein, as Claire said. I guessed it was a reconciliation dinner and considered going up to them to ruin it. They hardly ever went out. Amanda had told me that Frank got jealous when other men looked at her. She wasn't taking any risks this evening. I watched her when the waiter was at their table. While Frank ordered she examined the solitary red rose in the centre of the table.

I wasn't much of a friend, was I? I didn't even say hello. How could I when Frank was there? Why did you move in with him? How could you stay with him?

Chrysanthemums

The doorbell went and it was Amanda. "Sorry about the blood," she said. "I promise I won't drip on the carpet."

"If you do it might improve the look of it."

We had always joked about that carpet but Amanda only just managed a smile as she walked in. In the better light of the bathroom I looked at her face properly and asked, "What happened?"

Amanda looked away.

"Shouldn't you go to hospital?"

"I've spent too much time in hospital. It looks worse than it is."

"I think you'd better go to the doctor."

"I'm fine, really."

But even as Amanda said this she got paler and a few minutes later she fainted in the hall. Claire and I helped her out to the car. I drove. Claire held Amanda's hand and tried to talk to her about what happened. Amanda slumped against the

car door. Suddenly she said, "stop" and I did. "There's a florist," she said. "If you buy me some flowers I'll go to the hospital."

"You're mad," said Claire, laughing. "What do you want?"

"Those chrysanthemums."

Claire bought them and Amanda cuddled her flowers all the way to the hospital.

I wish we'd talked more. There I was studying counselling. They said I was doing very well but they didn't see me fail my friend. Claire, the politically active feminist, and I both tried to talk to you but you didn't want to. We should have forced you to face up to things. But your truth and ours were both so self-evident that we couldn't even argue.

Irises

Claire and I were skulking in the kitchen during Frank's visit. We didn't want to listen to the conversation in the next room but Frank's voice became too loud and angry to ignore. Claire opened the door. We saw a vase of irises fly across the room and smash against the wall, not far from Amanda's head. Claire stood in the doorway too shocked to do anything. I screamed at Frank to get out and amazingly he did.

Amanda sat crying next to the puddle of water and broken glass. She looked up at us and said, "He said I was flirting with his friend last night and look what he did."

With shaky hands she tried to restore the bruised and battered irises. Claire and I took the slivers of glass outside to the bin. In the fresh air Claire more than recovered — she was almost gleeful. "Well," she said, "that should be the end of Frank. She'll never forgive him that."

But you did forgive him, over and over again. And he never forgave you anything. It was one of the many imbalances in your fatally unbalanced relationship.

I stand looking at all the flowers until I realise it is getting late, cold and dark, and I am no closer to deciding. I wish I'd brought Claire with me. I think I'll go home and talk to her and come back tomorrow. But I have to tell Mrs Fahey about Amanda, so I go in to get it over with.

"Hello, Nicole," she says, "How are you? How's your friend, the budding florist? Are you choosing flowers for Amanda?"

Jane and her Gun

1. JANE PUTS A GUN IN HER MOUTH

While her mother talks to her, Jane places a gun in her mouth. She points it diagonally up towards the back of her skull. The gun is silver and has a plastic handle.

Jane thinks, *I wonder what she would do if it were a real gun, my finger on the trigger, ready to sculpt my brain onto the ceiling.*

Her mother keeps talking.

2. WORDS, WIND AND FIRE

Jane likes fire. She has set fire to tissues, paper, biros, her own hair and a woven garbage bin with a plastic liner. She tries to describe fire, invent fitting metaphors for it, but can't. She finds herself using the same words.

Words are important to Jane. Words and originality. She wakes up in the night, distracted by the wind. She can't go back to sleep, so she tries to find verbs to net the sound of the wind. *Baying, groaning, shrieking, whimpering, flailing, pining...*

The next day Jane reads the thesaurus.

3. BIAS

Jane walks through the shopping centre and attracts the attention of fleshy young men. She sighs. Even in primary school it was always fat boys. They liked her.

They would push her over, sit on her so she couldn't breathe. They kicked down her sandcastles. They stuffed sausage rolls down the back of her uniform. They told the teacher she had hit them, spilt their orange juice, broken their toys. They tried to kiss her.

But sometimes they would talk to her, and when the nicer ones did she would look away and wish that they weren't fat, because the words *gland problem* kept bouncing in front of her eyes.

4. TRANSPORT

Jane catches the train alone. Friends always say they'll meet her at the station, but they don't. She sits alone, although she knows people in the next carriage. She reads the headlines of other people's newspapers. When they realise they frown and fold the papers so she can no longer see them.

Jane's books give her headaches when she reads them on public transport. She watches other people, their interactions and idiosyncrasies, instead. Other people are mostly loud.

5. INTRODUCTIONS

Arrogance is the vanity of intellect, thinks Jane. She thinks she has nice eyes, but she prefers her brain any day. She thinks she is arrogant. She tells people this when she first meets them so that they won't be shocked. Sometimes she tells them she is eccentric too, by way of apology, and people smile, relieved. Sometimes she says she is tired.

6. THE EYEWITNESS AT IMPACT

Someone has jumped from the roof of the shopping centre, from next to the sign which proclaims *Roof-Top Parking*. Jane has always thought it would be a good place to jump from. She used to wonder why no-one had thought of it. High and hard, and if the fall didn't kill you, the traffic would.

A woman carrying a string bag misshapen by ripe bruised fruit is interviewed. Her jowls quiver as she tells them that at the millisecond of impact, printed on her mind in eternal slow motion, the person's feet went up to her knees. She sobs as the camera zooms in.

Jane thinks it is mean to go to a close-up when the woman is crying. She would CU the fraying string bag, ready to burst, the fruit scurrying to hide, cowering in the gutter, springing on cracks in the pavement, loping towards doom beneath the wheels of an empty ambulance. She thinks it is mean to jump four storeys in daylight in front of unsuspecting shoppers.

7. MORE TRAINSPORT

Someone has turned the back of the seat over so that it faces the one behind it. People curse someone, because now, if they want a seat on the crowded train, they will have to face their fellow fish-faced commuters and get their knees knocked. A delicate situation.

Jane takes the last patch of seat. It faces backwards. Jane does not mind seeing where she has been, and she is not vain about her knees.

Opposite her is a short man, wearing short shorts. His legs are furry. He watches her intensely. Jane knows the protocol and looks over his head. If she tries to look out of the window the people next to her will twitch, turn, glare. After eight stations she catches the man's fish eye. Their heads strain backwards like like magnets, pupils slide into red corners, but neither looks away.

It is unbearable.

As she finally looks over his head, Jane smiles with one half of her mouth. He looks away at the same time and grins. They look back and smile properly.

The short man leans forward. *What colour are your eyes?*

8. THE TASTE OF A GUN

Jane thinks about the toy gun in her mouth. Putting it there was an unconscious action, like swatting flying lint on a train.

9. MISCELLANEOUS RANDOM NOISES

As Jane touches her silver gun a fire ignites in a suburban house, and two small children are incinerated. Later it is on the news, a fat man cries, and her mother *tuts*. Jane points the gun at the box.

Her mother addresses comments to the television, as if it were important. *Ooh, norh, deport-the-buggers*. Jane wonders why, and whether she should remind her mother that no-one in the box can hear her. Her mother does not detect the meanness of close-ups, and never watches suicide stories.

When Jane comments on the news, it is about tastelessness, camerawork, words. *Syntax! tense! grammar!* She is not sure if her mother listens.

t r o v e



a collection of creative writing from the University of Western Australia

| | |
|------------|---|
| Available: | Department of English, The University of Western Australia Nedlands WA 6009 |
| Cost: | \$7 (plus postage) |

RICHARD HILLMAN

Bush Moniter

I telegraph my eyes into your space
a stretching bark half-way up a eucalypt
and admire
your inscribing claws
and body
basking under scaling sun
your lace agate skin shimmering
in a vertical haze of leaves.

Then, you raise your royal head
your free reaching eyes
and strong long neck
above your rippling body
as you shuttle back down to earth.

Your noise is unmistakable
you do not fear to be heard:
from lofty verandah
my ears follow your unchallenged walks
your strolls through scratching scrub
with your tail sliding over clenched leaves
and your claws cracking dry bracken.

I remember summer gardens
steel claws turning earth
tearing up persistent weeds:
I watch our moniter of the bush
come and go like a gardener in season.

The Colour Purple

decidedly male: clumps of
purple berries dangle

from a tree, each a heavy
scrotum weighing down

the branch, hard balls in
the ball of my hand;

little aggro faces — kabuki
masks — livid, spitting

ferocity, they hang together
in gangs, fend off

feral birds; fall uselessly
to the ground, carpeting

the lawn — grenades for children,
the colour purple

splattered against doors, walls
and windows

Beyond Disillusionment: Frank Moorhouse's *Grand Days* and Post-Colonial Idealism

For all its overtones of liberation, post-colonial discourse so far has tended to centre upon various kinds of disillusionment, whether with, conventionally, the project of European colonisation, or, as in the work of such African writers as Nuruddin Farah and Ayi Kwei Armah, with the process of colonial liberation itself.¹ Fragmentation and separatism have been the keynote of the post-colonial; it has been analytic, not synthetic. Post-colonialism is thus linked with the mainstream of twentieth-century intellectual discourse, which has not been friendly to idealism. From the critiques launched by psychoanalysis and modernist cultural pessimism at the beginning of the century to deconstruction and cultural materialism near its end, we have been taught to regard idealism as hopelessly naive, and to congratulate our intellectual leaders when the "see beyond" idealism or launch lacerating critiques of its pretensions.² One can think of no more loaded epithet in the intellectual debate of the past few generations than "meliorist".

What a surprise, then, to read Frank Moorhouse's latest novel, *Grand Days*. This massive book has as its core a project to rehabilitate the image of the most avowedly meliorist public phenomenon of the twentieth century, the interwar League of Nations at Geneva. The League of Nations, of course, was established after the War to End All Wars, and failed to prevent an even worse one twenty years later, thus becoming a synonym for paralysis and futility in the face of human aggression. To take the League as literary terrain is brash enough; to endorse it as emphatically as Moorhouse does is even more dramatic. In a literary world that has grown to see the referential function of novels as to deliver us knowledge about something apart from ourselves that we do not already have (as we expect Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* to "give us" India, or as the Swedish Academy expected Patrick White to bring a new continent into literature) Moorhouse unabashedly propagandises for the League and the universalist and internationalist perspective it symbolises. Moorhouse's stance with respect to the league can lend a valuable strengthening of the pulse to the post-

1. See especially Armah, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, and Farah, *Maps*.

2. This is seen in the debate over post-colonialism at a very primary level in the recent review of V S Naipaul's *A Way in the World*, by Brent Staples in the *New York Times Book Review* (May 22, 1994). Staples congratulates Naipaul for his ability to recognise the darker side in human affairs, as if this recognition is a beacon of automatic wisdom and lends ballast to Naipaul's well-known conservatism, long hailed in American journalistic circles.

colonial project, which is in danger (as will be clear to anyone who attended the 1993 Modern Language Association convention in Toronto) of being hijacked by the very metropolitan elitisms it seeks to challenge. It can reaffirm post-colonial agency while advancing beyond any concomitant disillusionment.

Grand Days is a very unexpected phenomenon not only in terms of post-colonial literature, but with respect to Moorhouse's own career. Moorhouse has principally been known as an experimental satirist, typified by the savvy sprightliness and scathing irreverence of such books as *Forty-Seventeen* (which, set later in time, contains some references that echo those of this book, and presumably will be explored further in successor volumes of the series of which *Grand Days* is the initial instalment). Like many another satiric writer, Moorhouse has clearly decided to set his sights higher and sing a nobler song. This move, of course, is a potentially lugubrious and pompous one, as can be seen in the recent sodden production of the once-hilarious Michael Wilding. Even if *Grand Days* was not this sort of book, though, its internationalist and idealist vision, its sense that the world can be made better and that a work of fiction can both portray and expedite this process, is so unfashionable that would not take much effort for critics to react as if it were pompous and bury Moorhouse's reputation as they have buried such idealist writers of the League's own era as Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse, any mention of whom routinely draws a ripple of snickers from intellectuals schooled in the precepts of despair.

Moorhouse, though, anticipates his critics by protecting *Grand Days* against any charges of pomposity or naivete. He does this through two means: character and form. Moorhouse's protagonist is not your typical League of Nations diplomat: she is a woman and an Australian. When Edith Campbell Berry first arrives in Geneva to take on her duties with the League, our first image is of the Australian ingenue boldly entering the heart of Europe, to help pioneer a psychology that can see beyond Europe's own self-consuming divisions and go where Europe cannot (in what might be termed "Young Einstein" trope). In some respects, Edith is synecdochic for the emergence of Australian national identity after the First World War. Australia was a member of the League, as a fully-fledged independent nation, and this was one of the nation's first opportunities to distinguish itself on the international stage. Part of the book's idealism derives from its Australianness; the intellectual regime of cynicism that has dominated the twentieth century has the effect of foreclosing the idealistic option for an Australia, that, unlike its European counterparts, has never experienced it as a "mature" nation. Uncorrupted by European despair, the Australian diplomat can pierce through its ideological pretensions and hypocrisies and strive, in a heroic and certainly not uncomplicated way, for the truth. The obvious national component to the book has led one reviewer to describe it as "thumpingly Australian".³ But Moorhouse does not slather this equation on every page of the book (which at its simplest would be too reminiscent of A D Hope or James McAuley, reductively interpreted); for long stretches, we forget the provenance of the book's protagonist. Edith's Australianness, along with her gender, gives her an outsider's perspective on the Eurocentric and male-dominated League. The League, characterised by its "realist"/pessimist detractors as a kind of ideological null set free from any gratifying differential inflection, cannot be seen in this way if it is seen through Edith's marginal, half-subaltern eyes. In approaching the League

3. See Peter Wolfe, "League of Nations serves as a backdrop for social comedy," in *Antipodes*, Summer 1994, 73.

from without, Edith, and thence Moorhouse and the reader, considers it from a critical distance even as she participates meaningfully and empathetically in its mission. Edith's character is presented interestingly. In contemporary works by male novelists about female protagonists, an attempt is often made to "get to the heart of the female character", the male novelist then being congratulated, presumably not only by himself, for his empathetic acuity. Moorhouse, rather than risking the arrogance of this approach, does not get to the "inside" of Edith as much as he develops her as a mechanism to explore the "outside" of the League and its ramifying processes.

Edith's gender, though, is not just a perspective upon the League; at times it is even equated with the League itself. The playing around with gender roles inherent in Edith's possessing a high-ranking diplomatic post in 1920's Europe is extended as Moorhouse fascinatingly compares the rootlessness and social experimentation of the 1920's, in their explosion of traditional social patterns, to the League's attempt to transform the ruling ideology of the traditional nation-state. (This differs from T S Eliot's view in "The Waste Land" which linked 1920's anomie with "the breaking of the nations"). Edith's chief love-interest in the book, the androgynous Ambrose Woodhouse, epitomises a series of doublings between personal and political experiments which reaches its narrative peak in the intertwining of a masked transvestite ball and the efforts of an Azerbaijani representative to seek League recognition for his nation.⁴ Edith's relationship with Ambrose, characterised by a series of duplicities, is throughout likened to the diplomatic entanglements that were the League's concern. This parallel is captured most wittily when, after Edith's initial sexual encounter with Ambrose, it is stated that "She had presented her credentials".⁵ Both diplomacy and sexuality are seen as subsets of a more general mode of performances, or, as Edith styles them in the book's opening chapter, "Ways" through which human mood and intention is represented:

To have free hands allowed her to ward and hold, which she considered important in the technique of travelling. It could be considered one of her Ways of Going.... Her Ways of Going were mostly what she had thought about during the early part of the journey after the train had left the Gare de Lyon, especially as they applied to conversation. She had developed most of the Ways on the voyage over to Australia but they now needed refinement and further practice (3).

The Ways represent the intersection of rhetorical modes with emotional stances; they objectify emotion at the same time as they permit subjectivity to enter formal, codified engagements characteristic of diplomacy. Developed on the voyage (note that Moorhouse could as well have said "way") from Australia, they also represent the skills of self-presentation and self-awareness necessary for an Australian, and

4. Although Moorhouse began writing this book in 1982, long before the breakup of the Soviet Union could be widely anticipated, there are clearly references to 1990's political history in the published book, the "Azerbaijan" referent (the Caucasus republic continuing to seek representation in Geneva after the USSR had deprived it of genuine independence) being the most apparent. Moorhouse departs, though, from the threnodies about the post-Communist world popular among Western intellectuals. Instead of complaining about "tribalism" as seeing the post-Soviet world as simply an emergence of repressed regional identities as do most (a representative sampling is seen in Scott Malcomson's Yuppie travelogue, *Borderlands*, New York: Faber and Faber, 1994). Moorhouse, perhaps looking to the republican debate in Australia, looks to the optimistic potential inherent in the rediscovery of democratic national polities.
5. Frank Moorhouse, *Grand Days*, (London: Picador, 1993), 55. All further citations will be incorporated into the text.

perhaps most fertile in an Australian's subaltern consciousness. In linking Edith's personal ways to her diplomatic duties, Moorhouse demonstrates that the basic activities of the League are premeditated upon a calculating self-consciousness. Thus the staid, idealistic League suddenly is pictured as quite transgressive. Moorhouse nimbly has it both ways: he powerfully endorses the League's idealism while seeing that idealism as itself somehow subversive. In one of the exhaustive Appendices to the book, for instance, Moorhouse mentions that the League's existence was virtually premised upon the presence of the duplicating machine. Without the proliferation of paper and the ability for messages to be quickly reproduced, the League's grandiose visions would have had no material ballast:

By the end of the 'twenties, the League staff had duplicated more than ten million sheets of paper — about a million pages a year.

It is doubtful that the League of Nations could have functioned without the invention of the duplication machine which came to be commonly known by the company name of Roneo or Gestetner (548).

Thus even the League's bureaucratic routines have a transformative side; they create a kind of self-referentiality that, unlike most deconstructive varieties, is not skeptically corrosive but liberatingly pluralistic. The League does not need to censor or repress the written word through a univocal "originality" but is comfortable with verbal multiplicity and ramification, and is indeed both by-product and engine of an "information revolution". The League processes self-reference as a necessary by-product and agent of sociological differentiation; the proliferation of copies is not just a simulacrum of an elapsed "real" society, but a precondition for modern attempts to expand upon given or assigned reality. Moorhouse thus rebuts the assertions of most twentieth-century thinkers that liberal optimism is incompatible with fictive complexity.⁶

Moorhouse's project in *Grand Days* is both imaginative and inspiring. But is it truly decolonising? It could well be said that Moorhouse's apotheosis of the League neglects the fact that the League was in origin a vision of American imperialism and was in practical terms dominated by traditional European powers. The truth is more complex: the League was both imperialistic and decolonising. This can be illustrated by the mandate the League gave to Australia to administer the former German colony of Papua New Guinea; the same hand that made Australia a partner in the community of nations took it upon itself to decide that other, darker-skinned peoples were not ready for this status. But the very existence of the Mandate system, by which former colonies were to be prepared for existence as independent states (this process finally being completed in Namibia in 1990) provided a theoretical rationale that said the colonies *should* ideally be independent, even if practically they *could* not be, at least as far as Europeans were concerned. Even more, the internationalism espoused by the League threatened to supersede traditional empires, and

6. In this regard, Moorhouse bears resemblance less to canonical post-structural thinkers such as Jacques Derrida than to other theorists of self-reflexivity such as Jean-Francois Lyotard and Niklas Luhmann. Moorhouse, though, tacitly suggests that it is high time to stop automatically seeking a European pedigree for fictional and philosophical complexity - given that the Australian Edith has a far more thorough philosophical grasp of the complexities of the League's mission than the established Continental diplomats whom she encounters in Geneva.

thus inherently was empowering to subject peoples.⁷ The reader is reminded, for instance, that so-called "Third World" nations such as Brazil had veto power over the entry into the League of traditional European powers such as Germany, a power equation not formally reflected even in today's United Nations. If, Moorhouse implies, the League had gone on, it eventually would have presided over the process of decolonisation monitored eventually by its successor international organisation.

And this decolonising tendency also has potentialities for post-colonial theory. Post-colonialism is premised upon an evasion of a febrile nationalism; its arguments are, to allude to a recent book by the Canadian poet/critic Frank Davey, post-national ones. Diaspora and multiplicity are the keywords of the day. But there is something resigned in these assertions of political polysemy; the vulgar-nationalist ogre, although lent the stigma of fundamentalism, is also lent the aura of vigour and force. Moorhouse aligns emotion and passion on the side of idealism and internationalism; he brings cosmopolitanism to life, and prevents it from subsiding into passive jargon and theory. The League of Nations, far from being blandly neutral, had a political potential unfulfilled by even today's political criticism. Moorhouse's unabashed belief in the possibility of a better world is crucial to the presentation of this potential.

But, of course, the League did not go on. Moorhouse, never one for melodrama, does not load the ending of his book with a lot of "the storm clouds were about to roll over Europe" rhetoric; instead, Edith ends her tenure at the League more or less in concert with the end of her relationship with Ambrose, and her engagement to the far more conventional British journalist, Robert Dole. It is suggested that Edith and Dole will return to Australia and lead a more sedate, conventional life. But Moorhouse does not want us to take this as a retrenchment to the colonies as Europe falls prey to tyranny, a disillusioning withdrawal from the idealism of the League to a reductive and truncated "real". Edith's ideals remain paramount, and she stands for Moorhouse as a living and self-conscious alternative to the dominantly pessimistic vision of the twentieth century. Moorhouse fashions his fictive version of the League into a vision not only morally superior to realist particularism but also more substantive, compelling, and devious - yet ultimately inspiring. By managing to combine fictional self-awareness with belief that the world can be made better. Moorhouse presents us with an idealism that is no less fervent for its being post-colonial.

7. Mudrooroo's recent novel, *The Kwinkan*, (Pymble, NSW: Angus & Robertson, 1993) also notes this problematic relation between internal and external decolonisation, the two terms here being Aboriginal and Polynesian anti-colonialism.

A local habitation

It was a good winter, spring, and early summer: then the rain stopped. From the start of what should have been the wet season in late November, till what's often its end, in mid-March, only occasional brief showers fell. Say five inches total — 117 millimetres by our raingauge. Plenty of grass, but all dry and brown: no surface water — even the bullrushes died in the dried mud of the dam. We had to try a bore. Two holes to 120 feet each — it's an old rig, still measures in its worn, pre-metric fifteen foot rods. Maybe ten gallons an hour in one hole, the dust never stopped rising from the other. We gambled on the driller's nous and a third hole. Luckily. Good water at forty feet. Eventually, late March, it rained for a month.

I write this now because, suddenly, earlier tonight, some poems came. It's been a long barren dry. Good water at forty feet, rain every day for a month: too much to hope for, but you never know. It always rains, an old bloke told me once, at the end of a drought. I'm starting to believe him.

Under the glass slide For David

She watches him eat. He barely breathes, as if a sudden movement could frighten the object of his interest, cause it to take flight. He pierces the dark green leaves as if seeking, as if somewhere in the green depths there are answers to be sucked from the starch. He separates each layer from the next, exploring an anatomical map, swallowing the names and histories of each fibre, the geography of a thousand years with a precision she cannot name but which she longs to understand. It is as if he enters the food.

Perched on her end of the leather lounge, head cocked to one side, an eye moving in for focus. She is fascinated by this ritual, undergone in utter silence.

Yet alarmed. By the power of this quiet, this deep communion between food and eater that includes nothing but itself. She talks on. A desperate urge to fill the moment. Her voice set in motion. She tries to slow it down, stop it from gaining momentum as it approaches that dark tunnel, a silent tunnel, one she fears will consume her and drag her to her death. But it is useless now. She no longer owns it. It goes on its way, a rough train echoes between her ears.

A reminder of the silences she faced at dinners for all those years. The family gathered, just as the same dull words that make a phrase are crystallised to irony. It was here she first learned inconsistency. Saw what was said and done were not the same. Went into hiding. Desperate childhood attempts to colour the silent moment, fill it in the hope it would not collapse in thick, dark clouds — suffocate. This is silence. Or the other kind. The sharp, rough edge of a broken bottle. Cemented beside another, like teeth on the upper edge of a brick wall. Like the house she came from. The sharp teeth of suburban walls are cultural tattoos, signals of history and heritage. Broken bottles keeping the prisoners inside and out, a glass-enforced apartheid. Like silence. Holding each person within themselves, not daring to stray onto a neighbour's territory. Now, sitting here with him, watching quizzically from the edge of a couch, she fears she will be shot. A hand shoved involuntarily into the glass. It does not come. But it will. It always had.

Anxiety draws at her chest, squeezing the muscles so tightly a band of tension solidifies and occupies her spine. She cannot eat. She knows unless she opens the valve, she will explode.

"Where I come from, silence is a punishment."

He smiles, uncertain. "I just love to taste my food."

This is how they will learn from each other.

She is lifted over the wall and taking a deep breath, faces her meal. She places the food in her mouth, closes her eyes and tastes it.

I must remember, that where I come from, is not where I am now.

She has watched him, as she knows he watches her.

Looking for signs. She used to look for people in their words. Turn a phrase in the hope of discovering some deeper desire, a hidden purpose. Now she has learned, pierced by the sharp end of a phrase, or burned by a spitefully delivered verb, that words are never what they seem. So easy to abuse, to dress, to disguise. Ten hours of talking reveals less than a single gesture. Some movement, unconsciously delivered, innocent to its being watched traps the light — a hologram, reflecting in every direction the full geography of the soul.

This is what she has learned.

To watch, and record. To gather all things to the breast, like seed, to spit up and later digest.

The first time he looked at her his eyes did not waver. Not a flicker, down, over the body, a momentary pause at the cleavage. Not a sideways glance across her bare shoulder. He held her eyes solidly, without emotion but not from its lack. A firm grip, not squeezing the muscle nor collapsing within it, as if without spine.

There are lives in such a gesture. Not merely days, counted and haphazardly stored, or the odd experience notched into the bone, but a thousand lives recorded so clearly you can look through him to the beginning of time. He is direct. You can tell this, from just such a moment. When she was greener, such gestures had been, not lost, but deliberately discarded and ignored. *Words*: she had sought comfort in them, as if they, and not the glimmer in an eye, could tell a story.

How strange, that we close our eyes to what is known. That the closer the knife, the tighter we pull the blindfold.

She no longer cared for long and tedious descriptions of self. Had been given them before. So dearly loved, so precious, like Soma, the nectar of the gods once quenched her thirst, now dried like powdered milk on the wet pelt of her throat. She had seen a word taken, disguised, stripped of its meaning, when it raised its head, and she found it wanting. It was then she realised she loved words for their fluidity, and others, because of this malleability, would stretch and tear them.

So, when she is alone, she looks directly at herself and says: *give me the gesture*. It is not what is heard, the sweet and well delivered melody, but the clumsy fall of a wrist, or the tic of an eye, the tensing of the lips that has become her sustenance. Once, she ran. Now, she is a matador, provoking. The blanket red. *Come at me! Pierce my skin with your horns and if I bleed, then I bleed honestly. I will stand still. I am ready for you!* So careless — talkers. In motion. If they but knew, how easily they betrayed their origins. The dense smile. A rigid hip. How easy it was to read the cruel angle of a chin, the bitterness impregnating the skin. Perhaps then, we would converse, not just in silence, but utter stillness.

There had been a man once, who came to her, in poems. Unripe, she let him in. Drawn through melody, the rise and fall. He spoke with an invisible hand around his throat. Rasping for air. His shoulders turned. Not out. When he was unaware, he would collapse into himself. Not in sleep but resignation. His chest collapsed too quickly, as if some unseen brace was removed when he wasn't looking. But she was. Eyes trembling at the vision. *Did I tell you?* he would rise then, and pay homage to a story she wanted to hear. Such wants are poison. A bitter drug. So much needed. Until they are deliberately withdrawn from the body.

I've been cold turkey!

She watched David. Closely, for the codes, the bones of language. She watched him alone, and in relation to things. How, when his eyes closed in passion his lips opened, just so, like a quaver: suspended at the end of a phrase, for the listener to fill it in. Or the angle of his left arm as he drew her right shoulder towards and into him. It is through this kaleidoscope, she thinks, that Picasso created his crying women. It is necessary. Not in consciousness, but in the unconscious desire to understand, to taste the marrow, that makes a painter shatter a face to inhabit all perspective.

And then rebuild.

He too, watched curiously. Sometimes, she could not read him. And in those moments, when he was above and inside her, when she dared to open her eyes, despite fear she would flee her body, she would meet him. It was not with love that they looked at each other, for they were not yet in love. It was with a curiosity, a stern curiosity that foreshadows another land.

Later she would look at him and know, that it was the shadow of understanding that had cast its back against the light.

The ciphers he offered her, she placed on her bedside table, among the many objects she collected. Boxes, crystals, photographs of close friends, her grandmother's wedding. When she was younger, she collected nothing. Each week she threw the previous one out, a new world, a new design. It was as if an object held could reinfect an old wound, and she became a nurse, mad with cleaning. Not now. Now, she threw nothing away. Shells, an old coin he found at Rottneest. These took their place among the others.

The cleaning, when she was young, had been a sign of other things. A reflection of days without codes, or the ability to code. Days when seeing meant dying, and she was not prepared for the grief that would bring. Chemicals were a desperate hope that a movement revealed could be obliterated, bleached out of existence, as a page in your favourite book left to the sun. That was a time of not wanting to hold, not wanting to know. Not willing to believe. Wanting only to let go, to clean.

Now she does not merely embrace, she exhorts them. Her chin set firm, her eyes hard: *come and get me!*

She cups the coin, its rusted skin against her own. *This is a cell he has offered me.* She holds it to the light — it scatters a million splinters against the rim. She thinks: *it is here, where bodies are dissected to their smallest part, where samples are coloured with carrier and eased between the glass plate and cover of a microscope you watch a story unfold:*

"Are you coming," he asks. She smiles.

When he moves towards something, he is a man possessed. Nothing distracts him from his course. This time, it is a kangaroo. He has heard the sound of feet against the scrub. The cicadas high, as the sun. He must find it quickly, before it disappears. Between himself and the kangaroo there is no space or time. Even before he scrambles over the rocks and up the hill, he is at once part and within it. The desire to know not merely the precursor to its fulfilment. She knows this — *I have watched you eat!* Not hearing or speaking to her, not wishing to hear, or to speak, though afterwards, when the food was over, they would, just as curiosity leads to understanding. There are always signposts to the hidden lands. It comes, therefore, as no surprise, watching him move agilely over the rocks, a thin, brown boy scrambling towards a kangaroo, although time has filled him out, that until he finds it, this man would not be known if the sky fell in.

"There it is."

Such is his focus.

Now he will hold her. As after dinner they will speak. Or make love after the correct CD has been chosen and the volume tempered. He waits for her to finish a sentence before excusing himself. Hand on her knee, pressed firmly. A precision, waiting to be named. One which does not flow easily but leaps like quanta from one level to the next. Just as his strong legs push and grab simultaneously the face of a rock as he trails a kangaroo. It is not the easy flow of a river.

That is where they differ.

We are mirrors to one another, she has written. And still, we differ.

She flows like a river, beyond horizons, through time, behind ancestry. She is not without focus, nor within it. He holds her, the kangaroos scampering away. Must

that which we run towards, move away? This is the bush. She prays. But sadness bites her. With him behind her like this, she wants more than a moment. A moving towards. Wishes to chase the kangaroos from her mind. His arms wrap around her, strong, she aware of being a woman. Embarrassed by this facile symbol, she who has argued the boundaries of gender in terms alien to all but the theorist, by claiming it stakes a signpost in the ground by which she can measure herself also in relation to him.

Binarism, Ricardo calls it. He believes she is moving away from him now, afraid to explore the outermost boundaries of her soul. They have been friends for so long — such judgements sting. They are not the earlier arguments, about distinctions drawn by theorists. Those borders were not by them, but by those outside. By the writers of books, the presenters of long titled and sub-titled papers at academic conferences. The guardians of strange and exotic words. Judgement is painful when boundaries are eked out from within. For the first time she is brave enough to define.

"There is a fine line between self-discovery and distraction," she says. Exploring the outermost latitudes and longitudes of self is a tightrope — imbalance can push you into the void. And now, for her, too many oceans have been crossed. Too much has been lost in the journey. Strains of her self have worked their way out of the liquid like shreds of crystal tenuously gripping a cotton thread suspended in a salt solution. Longing to hold on, not to be reabsorbed. As she does. To hold them, as shells, a rusted coin.

"Why are you running away from yourself?" Ricardo asks. She does not answer. Not out of fear, but a deeper grief. That which she runs towards. What else must she lose for the privilege of drawing her own map? It is too late to employ another cartographer. She has decided that the mistakes will be by her hand as will the discoveries. *My borders will not be drawn by a greater politic, by the tyranny of the vast unconscious, by the stars.* The more she flows into herself, the further she slips from the dictates that led her there.

"I am doing what I want."

David dropped her home the first time they went for coffee.

"I want to discover more, but I can't do that now."

A marker. Two parts of the same sentence, related, yet pulling in opposite directions, a comma. She thinks: he is a nerve, information transmitted not continuously, but with its appearance, pushed over the abyss by an invisible impulse. What is that pulse, she asks? As he does, when he stains a thin fibre and photographs beneath a microscope, a coloured thread that carries life.

I want to know.

She lies beside him, the circumference of her arm curved within his. It is warm. Moist from sweating. They have been making love. She more white for his creamy dark skin against hers. She watches, not their arms, but a fragment of them, an angle cut at the wrist to below the elbow, not straight on, a slanted view. What would he call that? The scientist. The seeing and drawing of conclusions from an angle?

And she, the artist?

They are not so far apart as she imagined.

She likes to open things up and take them apart, putting them together as his grandfather taught him. When he was young. She watches, grandfather crouched low beside him, heads bent forward like birds drinking, his strong, agile fingers little animals, sniffing and pawing the outer edge, moving inwards, through each layer, searching. She shudders.

He tells her stories of where he has been and what he has done. These she savours. He will not say, "it was here that I learned ...". Instead, he offers her a painting, rich with colour and space, from which she draws her own conclusion. A vast landscape which she can enter at will, and return, holding a leaf, a grain of sand in recognition of where she has been. At times like this, she is the scientist, he the author. She likes it this way. Moving in and out of the slippage, back and forth between the void where things are not defined. This is the land with which she is familiar, the land she has always lived in. Where mist and rock and not so different, where she can speak freely to the living and the dead.

"I met a man in Kuala Lumpur, he was a gambler." They are sitting at the table, the sun beating down through the glass roof. She has noticed the table behind. Three children. Friends — an odd collection. Already, she sees. A spine too straight, a hand too limp. How — in a glance — so much revealed? The invisible strain between a moustached man and his wife. How does she know, before he looks up at her, that he will look up, know before he holds her gaze, that he will hold it, sadly, resigned. They are both smiling — the moustached man and his wife, the black haired woman and her husband. David takes a bite. "A magician unloaded his powers onto him before he died, although he did not want them. We became friends."

In those opening lines, is the fuller topography. The scent she tracks him with to the other world, which lies beneath the lines, the story, a hidden treasure. She has learned how to do this, like a tracker. Trained to stand still, to catch the scent on a breeze, and follow, through overgrown paths where the brush grows thick with thorns and day turns into night beneath the weight of foliage, the path inland. She knows how to read a picture, beneath the paint, beyond the spaces of light and shadow. This is not just a story of his travels. There are many men in Kuala Lumpur, and many gamblers. Travellers are always transient friends. And magicians? His words close around her hand, leading her down with him, through the story, so that it is no longer they, but it, which guides them. She *is* the parable. She sees his gambler, still in trouble with the police. Running, the weight of ten thousand years of magic in his bones. Still gambling. She will not ask for judgement. He has already sucked the marrow of right and wrong to discern its taste as she has tread the line between the exploration of the self and its destruction. No judgement will be forthcoming, though he will never gamble. She will not need to ask him what he learned, what this sad man taught him. It is in the story, in the words untold, in the words beneath the words.

"When I was a boy, I played this game, in a shop." In Malaya. "I lost my money," he explains. The man at the table strokes his wife's hair, as if searching for the love he once threaded through and left in it, unspun silk on a breeze. Lifting each strand in curious examination — believing the treasure hidden. He gives up quickly. She is sitting too straight. I know she does not taste her food. "I never gambled again." The children laughing. "It was only later, I learned about probabilities." It is all here, in this restaurant. A boy in a shop. An ungainly fellow for those who look too quickly, black eyes alive with life, uncertain. The sun beating through a glass roof. A man displaced between strands of hair, a woman, rigid in her sense of loss, a possessed gambler. There is no need to leave, no need to find another place to eat. Later, he will learn about mathematics. But it is in the shop, with the smell of spice in the air, that the boy decides his future. Just as, in the flicker of the eye, a life is revealed. He lets his wrist drop to the table and sighs, she toys with another mouthful. There is so much grief.

In years to come, if I step out before you from a taxi, would you know who I am?

"Why are you running away from yourself?" The sheerness slides through her ribs. What am I running towards?

The table: a picture of her best friend who lives in Switzerland. Mireille. Pronounced — mee-ray. Red hair hennaed for effect, swinging wildly. Framed in pewter. They met years ago. When she first moved out of home. So young. That had been a summer she would never forget. Discovering freedom. Balmy Perth summer nights of wine, *Betty Blue*. Conversations in minor keys. Souls distilled in the thick, heady liquid, would coarse through the veins, intoxicating the drinker. It is here that another may enter us. May run, not just through the blood, but ferment in the bones, despite renewal. Memory is pregnant with scent. Once you have known someone, have drunk from the same bottle the blood of the soul, you are no longer in relation to them. From then on, you do not live in one body, in one life. You are of and in them. An aspect. Where they go, so too do you. We live a hundred lives. Lives lodged in the cells, the atoms of being, the spaces beneath, between the paint, beyond. *So many paths travelled together, so many tears shared, so much joy. I am the story.* Or the old black and white of her grandmother. She lifts the frame to her face and breathes deeply. You can smell her sense of duty, like vinegar. Though her husband still torments her. His cruelty untempered by the cataracts, burning into him. Ah, those men born in the war. A generation cut off from themselves. A buffer to the shrapnel that lodged itself in a thousand thousand hearts. Needing the shield. And to their children — what legacy? What dry legacy? Not to feel? To be? Ah, those children born of the war. The cold. The duty bound. There are times she looks at him, knowing she could throw boiling water through his face and he would still depend on her to save him. Does she know that? Does it ever cross her mind, as he tells her blindly, how useless she has been? Or does she secretly long for these barbs, are they honey for her deeper thirst? Who — has been betrayed? *Not I!* She laughs softly: and it was granny who always said — it takes two to tango. These are the women of my line, dancing with their shadows. These, my history. Duty-bound teachers who hid their college degrees. Still sitting for his sermon. He, still making decisions, despite her government pension which in old age pays the bills. A

teacher. Without her, he could not eat. So like my mother. She shudders. A ghost casts itself against her shoulder. I will not hide mine. If my fingers calcify with age alone, I will not hide. That is more difficult, she has learned, for a woman. Despite the times. How Ricardo hates those words. *What is a man? What is a woman?* How can she explain, she who has agreed with him so long? What it is to claim a word, to pierce the soft skin with your teeth and suck it of its juice. It enters the vein. She lifts the trinkets he brought her from India where she will one day live, if only for a while. Two silver pillboxes. Ivory capped. She had always longed for those mountains. How different they were, people would say, although twins. She, always digging through incense racks which her sister loathed, eating brown rice and fasting, attempting meditation. And Michelle, reading the *English Country Garden*. Mirrors, and yet we differ. Two phrases moving in opposite directions, a comma separates and joins. The power of punctuation. Her eyes glass over, the weight of India in her palm. How many years of friendship are beaten through these silver, simple things? He believes she has betrayed him. She is moving away. Loss sweeps though her — a needle finds its goldmine.

There are other things about him. Karate. Years spent in the army. That frightened her. The question. And there were others, for which she was not prepared.

She cradles them. Life is held just so, in the palm of the hand. Like the pills they carry. Years framed. How many, in there? Paths taken, parallels. How many lodged within the metal? She weeps, momentarily, as if gasping for breath. Then — nothing. She cannot descend yet, into the pool of grief that grips her. For her, that transition has never been easy. But it will come, as it has before. *If I stand still long enough, it will come.*

"How much?" she whispers, knees to the floor, "will you exact from me?" Eyes glass over. "How much, to be myself?" She feels herself slide, down, in through her skin, to the trembling person behind. *It is coming.* If she could pity herself, perhaps she would. Perhaps she would take advantage of the tide. To what end? There is no point to that question. Just as there is no point in asking how he felt when his father died. Whatever must be levied against her, she will accept. There is no option. There are those whom death destroys. He is not one of them. Grief bites the skin. Soon, it will find the flesh.

His grandfather appeared to him three times after he died:

"On the first night, I opened my eyes, and there were three of him. Then two, on the third night, one." She nods. "I know what I saw. On the fourth night, he was gone." She nodding. He told her once, that a blade honed and fired is keener. For what?

She looks at the boxes. Beside them, the new shells. Strained syllables, the hard assonance of a tongue-twister. These, he brought from Rottneest. An old coin. The face washed away with cleaning. Lemonade. (Fancy stripping the past with lemonade, sweet bubbles eating metal. He has given her a cell — a splinter — not just of himself.) A coin, but if you look closely, if you draw it close, to your eyes, you will find a woman, standing on a boat, on the ocean. The vast brown sea. With her, a

man? It is hard to tell. The layers removed to reveal, also shroud her. The coin sheds its outer skin, peeling, multicoloured like a bruise the pigments of the desert. There are two people in the boat, on the ocean, vast, although it is she who is prominent: brown, standing, looking out to sea.

"Where are you going?" she whispers to the woman. Erect, her eyes fixed ahead.

"What is it you see?" She does not turn. She is holding the mast, the man beside her fading into the desert sand, like a bruise.

What can I write of him?

A man I have known a month. A month of gestures, month of words. That his eyes did not waver when he met me? That grief has pushed a thumb against his throat, just so? A grief he has written in minor keys, played in the middle of the night, as if anonymous, as if it was someone else, and not he, who was its composer. "Play me a song." A gentle leader? That in codes he has offered I find a man, who leads by his own example. Who carries the weight of a dead father's demands on the raised bone of his shoulder, which I trace with my lips when we make love. I have watched him eat — he is at once part of it. An adventurer, restless, able to, needing to distract himself from the ghost of a cold machismo. A shadow, the cruel slant of a cheek against the light? The son of a man born of a man born into war? And whose daughter sits like my grandmother in silence, waiting, her destiny captured in a black and white at a wedding? His face and mind unblunted, filtered of emotion, now drained, now held inside, tight. How tightly held? Can I take these signs, these few moments of a lifetime know? That he renamed himself. Not for long. Culled to roll easier off a Western tongue. Words cannot be trimmed so easily, nor heritage. Sharp teeth guard that wall. And in the morning, it is still the same face in the mirror — more distant from itself. Silent.

Codes are subject to revision. Bones are formed and broken. Maps redrawn, the borders shifted by wars and knowing, enforced from outside and within. A brief second, a splinter of light, reflected off the rim of a coin. Is this all we have to hold onto? The sound of feet on scrub, an invisible pulse along the nerve, the fluid outline on the map of self we move towards?

Even so.

Even so. She writes: the borders are somewhat defined. Ultimately, he will do what he wants, as I will.

Ultimately, each will do what they must.

It is all there, on the table. Pillboxes, India, the Rottneest shells. A boy in the shop, his arm enclosing hers. The hot sun through the glass. They exist in relation to one another. Unnamed. Frail. Beyond the paint, the gambler. An angle cut through the past to a future: a woman on the boat, the ochre sea around her, shedding itself, carmine layers fading to rust. She is gripping the mast.

The Smoker

Blair came at me with
flashy white teeth,
impeccably groomed
blue black hair that
lay captured by a
Tiwi design pure silk scarf.

Babe, how that word
oozed vociferously through
the damp bed sitter which
was home

Babe, do you mind if
I smoke, the brand
was the same as my
father's; unfiltered camel

I opened the nearest window
and commented on
the weather, that
seemed life a safe
enough topic.

Siding

The train that ran at five o'clock
stopped at each station from
there to where I used to go

I could look out at any
point and see the world
cut up by railway fence;

or lines of women who had
spent too long in the glare
of washing strung across

backyards; the wooden pegs
arthritic from the rain that
gripped the party frocks and

underwear of suburbs by the way
left out to dry with nothing
to do until Saturday night;

or the apocalyptic stare of chooks
muttering regret among the choko vines
as they separated wheat from tares.

But now? I like to get out and hang
around a bit and reap the wild
graffiti that bloom beside the track.

REVIEWS

Drusilla Modjeska, *The Orchard*, Pan Macmillan, 1994, hardcover. ISBN 07329 08027, \$19.95, 268pp.

Sometimes our first impressions of a book can be skewed by what we have chanced to read just beforehand. Such was the case when I began reading *The Orchard* immediately after finishing Gillian Mears' novel, *The Mint Lawn*. Mears' writing is so vibrantly confronting that I was, at first, unreceptive to the delicate intricacy of Modjeska's latest book. I had also been so moved by *Poppy* (1990) that I wondered how Modjeska would be able to satisfy the inevitably raised expectations of her audience thereafter. It was not until I entered the second of the three main sections of *The Orchard*, entitled "Sight and Solitude", that I acquiesced in the rhythms and resonances of the book, and became absorbed.

Both *The Mint Lawn* and *The Orchard* distinctively blend autobiographical matter with fiction, exploring the ways in which memory and imagination collaborate in the process of psychological healing. That Modjeska and Mears have shared preoccupations as writers is demonstrated most overtly in their contributions, *inter alia*, to *Sisters* (1993), edited by Modjeska. The consistent concern in Modjeska's work with the struggle of women to claim authority over their own lives, and in the telling of their own stories, is to an extent Mears' also, as indeed of a diverse range of other contemporary Australian women writers. "When a woman writes 'I' ", the narrator of *The Orchard* asserts, "she must reconcile seeing with being seen, and negotiate the transposition of the first term to her own use." The concept of vision — literal and figurative — is central to *The Orchard*, just as the sustaining trope throughout *Poppy* was that of "finding one's own voice".

The Orchard defies generic categorisation and conventional narrative structures, simul-

taneously employing and extending the characteristics of the essay form, the post-modern novel, and the *Kunstlerroman*. Modjeska has said that in *The Orchard* she has pushed further into fiction than in *Poppy*.¹ Nonetheless, as one would expect, there are reverberations of *Poppy*, as in the reappearance of the narrator's childhood friend "Henrietta", whose death at an early age in a road accident haunts both books as tragic waste.

Insofar as *The Orchard* can be read as having a plot, it portrays a transitional stage in the lives of several creative women who function as a *de facto* family for one another. The short opening section, "The Verandah", introduces Ettie, an octogenarian widow whose home in the Blue Mountains serves as an emotional base for all the women; Louise, in her mid-forties; the narrator, Louise's contemporary; and Clara, in her twenties. At one point the narrator states that: "We live in a culture that overvalues relationships and undervalues solitude." Each of the women is engaged in discovering her own independent integrity, while acknowledging her need for other women, and for her male friends and lovers.

The significant challenge for a woman, as Ettie presents it, is how to learn to cease defining herself reductively as wife or mistress. In the first main section, "The Adultery Factor", the narrator contemplates the story of a two-year affair, as related to her by Louise, the confidant of the married man and his lover. This is somewhat bleak reading, as the wounded self-righteousness of both wronged wife and frustrated mistress, and the ambivalence of the prevaricating man, are dispassionately recorded, the episode reaching a predictable conclusion.

"Sight and Solitude" is a meditation on the sense of sight, and the symbolic and emotional investments in this. The narrator describes a period of prolonged near-blindness, in which she is rendered almost helpless

1. In an interview with Rosemary Sorensen. *Australian Book Review*, no. 164, September 1994, 12-14.

by her need to remain immobile while her eyes heal. This circumstance leads her to consider the traditional linking of blindness and insight in mythology and, more prosaically, the reflexive recourse to guises or masks in which the expectation of seeing and being seen involves people in their everyday interactions.

Modjeska has indicated that while she has endured a frightening visual disorder, never having completely lost her sight, she was not presuming to describe or conjecture the experience of those who are totally blind (12). As someone who quite suddenly became extremely short-sighted at the age of twenty-one, I can appreciate the loss of self-esteem and certainty which the narrator of *The Orchard* associates with compromised vision. Likewise, I felt an affinity with the narrator's child self in the section entitled "The Winterbourne", in which her unhappy life in a prestigious private boarding school for girls is revisited.

Modjeska's name for her fictional Wessex school is inspired, "Carn" connoting in both British and Australian culture an exhortation to glory in competitive team sports. In Carn, the narrator and the other outcasts, girls who do not want to play hockey, participate in the school play or ingratiate themselves with staff and prefects, sustain a secret life for the most part in a large linen closet, in which they respectively play music, read, or simply think their own thoughts. The Winterbourne itself, a stream which runs only in winter, peculiar to chalk country, and in which apparently dead seeds germinate and bloom, is a potent motif for the psyche, which can somehow manage to be nourished even in desolation.

The various sections of *The Orchard* are interconnected by a number of themes and motifs. The narrator relates the stories of historical female portrait painters, as well as describing several richly allusive paintings done by her fictional characters. In one instance, a portrait literally betrays an identity — the subject's painted eyes reveal the secret she has refused to put into words. Gardens

are equally important throughout this book, as places offering stillness and solitude, while demanding and rewarding self-expressive effort.

The concluding section clarifies the title of the book in the narrator's retelling of an Eastern European myth originally entitled "The Orchard". The myth concerns a girl whose father is forced to cut off her hands, and who is given a pair of silver hands by a king who falls in love with her. During a time of exile, the woman grows a new pair of hands, and is eventually restored whole to her husband. In Modjeska's texts, this is a powerful feminist allegory of disablement and objectification under patriarchy, followed by the celebration of the self-defined woman. Modjeska's work will, no doubt, continue to invite us — her audience, her interlocutors — to find our voices, explore new ways of seeing, and take our lives into our own hands.

Heather Neilson

Ian Hamilton (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry*, Oxford University Press, 1994, £25.00 hardcover, 602pp.

Reference books are funny things. The entry on Melville in the 1955 *Britannica* is confined to four column-inches and dismisses everything after his sea novels: "... these records of adventure were followed by other tales so turgid, eccentric, opinionative, and loosely written as to seem the work of another author." In this adjectival wave are washed away such masterpieces as "Bartleby", "Benito Cereno", *The Confidence Man*, *Billy Budd*. I find this effect irresistible. Who *could* resist such antique knowingness? Trawling on a bit we drag up this encomium to "MEYNELL, ALICE (1849-1922), British poet". She flourished in an era which "felt its heart torn by the griefs of the Brontës, stirred by their glories, and almost clung to the hand of Elizabeth

Browning". This passionate figure has seventeen column-inches devoted to her memory, which only shows that in 1955 good connections still meant something.

Meynell features again in the *Oxford Companion*, though in a more informative guise. She sounds an interesting woman. Unhappily there's a conspiracy between encyclopædists and their readers (one that no one intended) to seem at a given juncture to know what the truth is. The more wary authors in the *Oxford Companion* are alive to this danger. Philip Hobsbaum labels *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* (1936): "a guide to the poetry enjoyed by intellectuals at the time of publication". A like closure no doubt awaits this present work of reference.

In the meantime, however, the book has all the marks of a very decent enterprise. There are 237 contributors: which ought to tend to heterodoxy. None of the pieces I've read is written in Theorick, and most contributors, like Hobsbaum, are bracingly to the point. Anne Stevenson tells us briskly: "In the quarter-century following her suicide Sylvia Plath has become a heroine and martyr of the feminist movement. In fact, she was a martyr mainly to the recurrent psychodrama that staged itself within the bell jar of her tragically wounded personality." "Tragically wounded" is a bit rich; otherwise the shortage of space has done wonders for cogency.

The volume is full of little jokes, most of which are serious. Peter Pierce writes of the late Anne Elder: "obscure menaces to the self and unrealisable desires" exercised her. "Elder's small corpus is technically skilled and temperamentally melancholy; no myth has yet been made of her". Gavin Ewart remarks of Kipling: "lines like "When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre" don't inspire confidence...". And here is George MacBeth in his brilliant short entry on Raymond Carver's poems: "Most of them strike the ear with a deliberate flatness of diction, an absence of metaphor, and an air of being arranged in roughly chopped lengths, as if a backwoodsman has been at a copse of prose with an axe".

MacBeth is also valuable on the excellent and problematic Robinson Jeffers.

The prose, since it is often contributed by poets, is in general precise and witty: "There has been much debate", says John Mole about the late R.S. Thomas: "Some see him as having abandoned the rocky acres for a nebulous cosmos, and a firm footing in metaphor for an inconclusive and often prosaic space-walking. Others regard his recent work as the finest, as an enlargement of his concerns and a refinement of his technique".

Mole's balance is not untypical. One or two of the poets surveyed may very well be duds, but one of them is so useless that a contributor has been unable to say something interesting about him. Peter Quennell — "QUENNELL, Sir Peter (Courtney)" — stands alone among the Q's, itself a circumstance which must have argued for his inclusion. And we hear that he was once "held to be a poet of high promise". While the height of that promise has diminished over seventy years, he is still the occasion for Seymour-Smith's observing: "... he was not committed to [modernism], nor, perhaps, to anything more than the development of a sophisticated style". — A burr in the psyche for many of us who pother with words.

Judgements in this book, naturally, will not always accord with one's own. The entry on Theodore Roethke describes "The Waking" as "a haunting villanelle". I would have thought it rather a parody of the pre-dawn maunderings of a Zen alcoholic — and an incoherent warning against the dangers of ancient verse forms. But perhaps "The Waking" is living out some philosophical life, of which I am snoringly ignorant.

This *Companion* has been an international affair. It may be mere fancy, but some of the Americans seem to perhaps lack the care of their British counterparts. Perhaps in the United States the project was supervised less closely? Edward Butscher wins the book's wooden spoon. On David Ignatow he is bold with metaphor ("The main literary current, still under the spell..."); he offers a solecism on

Anne Sexton ("...as was the extremes to which she pushed") and treats us to "anent" in talking of Ginsberg, whose "self-indulgent æsthetic", he says, "requires the harness of profound grief and fear to ride it into memorable verse": a solid thought destroyed by — what? — hyper-figuration? Richard Stull on James Dickey furnishes another of the small cache of inelegant entries.

On the other hand, I was taken by the view of David Mason on J.V. Cunningham: he confronted "... the incongruities of modern life with directness and purifying anger. His quest for virtue in "sinuous, exacting speech" suggests that he found little virtue elsewhere. If his poems display the plain style often associated with Winters and the Stanford School, they are also the best and most searching poems that school has produced".

That estimate, I think, is a fine miniature in itself, and a reminder that this book is more than a factual compendium. It's an archive of peer reviews: a survey of current opinion.

Another model entry is the one on Ian Hamilton: twelve lines of pure fact. It's admirably chaste; but one is thankful, for the sake of vitality, that the editor didn't insist on his example being followed throughout.

Les Harrop

Kevin Hart (ed.). *The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse*, Oxford University Press, 1994, \$34.95 hardcover, xxvi + 268 pp.

Kevin Hart's excellent new anthology makes one thing strikingly clear: when faced with the choice between the two traditional books of God, Australian poets invariably choose the book of Nature over the Scriptures. Repeatedly, Australian poets turn to the landscape; if not to consider religious matters as such, then to meditate on the sacred. At one extreme, FitzGerald's "The Greater Apollo" rejects nature as revelatory: "It is enough that

trees are trees, / that earth is earth and stone is stone". At the other, Kendall's "Dedication" presents Nature as "God's grand authentic gospel" (perhaps hinting that the others are inauthentic), though his vision is more pantheistic than orthodox. The two books meet briefly in Roland Robinson's "The Sermon of the Birds". Listening to a chorus of birds the poet thinks: "And as I stood there and listened, the Scriptures was / hitting me all the time".

Hart has produced a very fine anthology indeed; even its cover is splendid. He achieves an excellent balance between short and longer poems, and, like the celebrated English anthologist Geoffrey Grigson, he is adept at finding good individual poems from unlikely sources. In sporting terms he plays the poem, not the poet. The most obvious comparison is with Les Murray's *Anthology of Australian Religious Poetry* (1986), and in some ways Hart supports Murray's findings; principally, that there is a dearth of religious Australian verse worthy of notice before the mid-twentieth century. However, the comparison is deceptive, for Hart's anthology is far more balanced than Murray's eccentric work, and (excepting one instance) less inclined to do violence to the theme's already-wide parameters.

Obviously, collecting disparate writings under a theme is problematic, but I'm still not sure whether or not I found Hart's emphasis on this in his thoughtful and imaginative introduction a touch disappointing. Hart's observation that "Australian poets most given to formal experimentation tended to be uninterested in matters of spirit" is teasingly under-developed.

Anthologies of religious verse are written in the face of a suspicion which T. S. Eliot sums up in "Religion and Poetry": that "'religious poetry' is a variety of *minor* poetry". In Hart's anthology, there are no hymns, no advent poems, no carols or lyrics, no liturgical poetry — no poetry we call devotional. This is *not* the John-Betjeman school of Christian verse. No doubt there are good aesthetic reasons for this, and Hart's introduction

exhibits a tension between "plurality" and "quality". Quality wins. However, if we *really* believe that the meaning of "poetry" changes with time and place, then might we not be too ready to be *un*-pluralistic when it comes to historical change? Certainly, there is very little work from the nineteenth century in Hart's anthology; so little that Kendall's blank verse gains strength through contrast (Nan McDonald's excellent poems benefit from the same effect). Whether there really is no religious poetry worth talking about at that time or whether we can no longer countenance it as poetry, is an interesting thought. Certainly, one cannot deny that Hart's ear for quality is very good indeed, so perhaps the question is academic.

Because of the lack of nineteenth-century material, Hart presents his findings alphabetically, rather than chronologically. This produces some interesting comparisons: for instance, Robert Harris with Kevin Hart; Harold Stewart with Randolph Stow. It also adds to the sense that Hart is not overly concerned with viewing the poetry historically. This is unfortunately emphasised when he states that 1988 celebrated the bicentenary of Cook's discovery of Australia (a mistake Hart has made before). This is, of course, a very minor slip but not a slip one would expect from a publisher or scholar of such high standing.

None of this detracts from Hart's achievement; an achievement, one gets the sense, that was hard earned. Despite the variety of the collection, Hart writes that "there is rather less variety than I imagined there might be", especially given the "thousands of volumes I needed to read or re-read in order to make this selection". This apparent dearth reasserts the old feeling that religion occupies an uneasy place in the Australian imagination, even though paradoxically, the land itself is imbued with a sense of sacred. As already noted, Hart's selection emphasises this.

One of the best uses of such anthologies is to introduce lesser-known writers. One who appears in the anthologies of both Murray

and Hart is Noel Rowe, and his poems show him to be one of Australia's best poets yet to be given his own collection (that this is still so given the eight-year gap between anthologies is something of a disgrace). Rowe's meditation on the Annunciation ("Magnificat: I") is effective because it is so attached to the physical.

...There was fear, yes, but also

faith among familiar things:
light, just letting go the wooden chair,

the breeze, at the doorway, waiting to come in
where, at the table, I prepared a meal,

my knife cutting through the hard skin
of vegetable, hitting wood, and the noise

outside of children playing with their dog,
throwing him a bone...

Mary's "acceptance" occurs in silence: "Then all these sounds / dropped out of hearing". The striking thing about this poem is what it *does not* seek to do. Although Rowe refers to the Annunciation, nothing is announced as such. In a negative turn, silence speaks for the Virgin Mary's experience, and the division between the secular and the sacred worlds is briefly dissolved. Given Hart's own interest in negative theology, it is not surprising that he should be attracted to such poetry.

My only moment of discomfort was with the inclusion of Manifold's "Death of Stalin". One wonders, had an Australian written one, if Hart would have included a hymn to the Third Reich. Paul Connerton's *How Societies Remember* shows just how far totalitarianism can colonise the forms and language of religion, and one feels that this colonisation should be rejected, rather than admitted. Hart addresses this in his introduction, though I am not convinced. People have been put to death because of various religions, as Hart point out, but Stalin was *personally* responsible for mass death. Unfortunately, whether or not this distinction is important can not be further discussed here.

Among contemporary poets, Hart is

admirably inclusive. For instance, the longer poems of Stow, Harold Stewart and Gray stand out in the anthology; David Curzon's midrashes are superb (and a rare emphasis on the Scriptural book of God); and the agnostic Vivian Smith achieves a different emphasis in the new context. This is the best kind of anthology: one you can read straight through with pleasure, though its index of themes is very useful for those who will not. However one reads (or uses) this anthology one will find that, in William Hart-Smith's words, "God has so many faces".

David McCooey

Sneja Gunew, *Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Theory*, 1994. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press (Interpretations Series), \$19.95, 158pp.

People ... will go to great lengths to pigeonhole somebody. They think this knowledge gives them power.

Brian Castro, *Birds of Passage*, 1983:8.

Framing Marginality : Multicultural Literary Studies is Sneja Gunew's latest contribution to an area of study with which her name has become almost synonymous, both in Australia and abroad. Whilst the work is a pertinent intervention by someone to whom the theorising of multicultural writing owes much, it is also rather problematic in its quest for broad generalisations, as the very title seems to suggest.

In an "Introduction" to the work Gunew begins by raising a number of questions regarding the terminology and nature of a "critical apparatus ... for speaking about minority literatures, or 'literatures of lesser diffusion' or 'other solitudes', as they are referred to in Canada" (12). Borrowing from the critical work of E. Padolski Gunew then proposes the definition "ethnic minority writing" as more appropriate than "migrant

writing" or "multicultural writing", since "it draws attention to the question of ethnicity in all literature" (12).

Chapter 2 provides a good summary of the work being done by some of the major theorists working in the area of "alterity studies": Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Werner Sollors and Trinh-Minh-Ha. As Gunew suggests, multicultural literary theory has benefited greatly from their contributions, hence the importance of their work. Central to Gunew's thesis, however, is the Derridean concept of a "dangerous supplement". Through the analysis of specific works, Gunew elaborates further on the complex relationship between the Australian literary mainstream and its lesser appendage, "ethnic minority writing". Citing Derrida's assertion that "Framing always sustains and contains that which, by itself, collapses forthwith", Gunew notes that "It is in this sense that 'ethnic minority writing' may be said to frame Australian literature" (28). Although there may be some truth in such a proposition, there is also a sense in which it implies that ethnic minority writing is not Australian literature.

In a third chapter entitled "The Question of Authenticity: Feminist Theory and Minority Writing", Gunew addresses the dangers inherent in a tendency by "what could now be called hegemonic or orthodox feminism [not] to deconstruct its own authoritarian and racist assumptions" (43). Spivak's work, towards creating a place for women of colour within the larger framework of feminist discourse, is seen by Gunew as crucial. Citing Spivak and Trinh, Gunew alerts us to "the dangers of tokenism, which occurs when certain spokespeople for the marginal are constantly singled out as fully representative of those constituencies" (43).

This is clearly a very important aspect, and one which needs to be "singled out" here with particular emphasis to *Framing Marginality* itself. For despite an emphasis on the need to read difference, or perhaps because of it, there is a certain Eurocentric quality about the work, both in the theoretical approach and in the choice of authors whose work is read

and analysed.

It is in the nature of introductory works to simplify in order to better make a point. That marginality cannot be read as a homogeneous construct is noted by Gunew's continued emphasis on the "incommensurability of difference"; a concept she borrows from Bhabha. Yet her introductory chapter already starts by seemingly juxtaposing a centre perceived as inherently bourgeois to margins "innately" working-class. Further, when Gunew writes early in the work that "even a third-generation writer like Anna Couani continues to be labelled a migrant writer because her name signals her descent from Greek and Polish forebears" (xi-xii), she ignores an issue which is clearly more complex than that. Does "Malouf" signal a quintessentially Anglo-Celtic descent? Since the answer is "no", how does one account for his safe position within that Anglo-Celtic canon? Similarly, if "White" as a category "needs to be unpacked", as it certainly does, I would argue that it is for reasons greater than "in order to dissociate older colonial settlers from those who settled in significant numbers after World War II" (47). To be a "post-WW II White Australian" is hardly synonymous with a state of intellectual enlightenment. Nor is the pre-WWII White Australian precluded from sharing a genuine empathy with the marginalised. I find it difficult to believe, moreover, that either "Southern Europeans [or] Arabs refer to themselves as Black"(51) as a norm. Indeed I suspect that one of the crucial studies still to be done in Australian society will precisely address the issue of inter-ethnic racism. Marginality, whatever else it might be, is not a pre-lapsarian space of ethical purity.

Finally, in its focus on works by Antigone Kefala, Ania Walwicz, Rosa Cappelletto and Anna Couani the second half of the book seems to situate marginality within the first "large wave" of migrants to Australia, many of whose members today operate effectively from the rather comfortable position of a hegemonic centre. Many a recently arrived

migrant from Africa and Asia can tell of crowded "sweat shops", owned by members of this "first wave", in which persons with little or no English labour for up to 80 hours a week in disgusting working conditions. The "joy" of marginality is that one can always borrow what suits one's needs, apply it to one's deeds, and still remain marginal, often in more ways than one. By allowing such conflicting elements to go unchecked, Gunew's work creates the conditions for a construction of lesser marginalities, occupied by those new Australians to whom a frame of reference centred in the olive groves of the Aegean and Mediterranean littorals is as foreign as the one peddled by Paul Hogan's kitsch world of Crocodile Dundee — the "coolie" of Cappelletto's work, perhaps.

So what exactly is this "marginality" of *Framing Marginality*? It would seem that it is a space of great bleakness, eternal despair and Southern European connections. *Nosotros*, who quite enjoy their ability to play outside the centre, and occasionally inside it, remain unframeable. Which is, I suspect, as it should be: marginality, by its very nature, always has resisted containment. In *Framing Marginality* Gunew sets out to do too much in a limited space, and the work fails to consider what Fredric Jameson has usefully described as "the supremely mutable polemics of marginality and centrality" and its significance in any analysis of contemporary Australian writing.

Tony Simoes da Silva

Penny Gay, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women*, Routledge, 1994.

The first part ever to be taken by an actress on the English stage is thought to have been Desdemona in 1660, and since then, Shakespeare's women, possibly more because of than in spite of their relative scarcity, have often been the criterion by which an actress'

career is to be judged. Penny Gay's book is about five particularly "unruly" women in Shakespeare, all of whom, in one respect or another, challenge male authority and question the prevailing gender paradigms within their respective comedies. Two, Viola and Rosalind, are transvestite roles, one, Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, is from a play only marginally a comedy, and two are comic heroines very unlike each other: Beatrice in *Much Ado* and Katherina Minola, "renowned in Padua for her scolding tongue", whose unruliness, at least on the surface, is subjugated by the play's end. This would appear a strange grouping, and one wonders what calls for their inclusion at the expense of Portia in *Merchant of Venice*, Imogen in *Cymbeline*, or Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*, all of whom, as their respective plays' dominating characters, would qualify for selection.

Gay's unruly women, though, are not Viola, Rosalind, and the others; they are Peggy Ashcroft, Vanessa Redgrave, Judi Dench, Juliet Stevenson, Janet Suzman, and the other actresses (Gay prefers the word) who have played these roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company in the post-war era, up until about 1990. In five stage histories aided by numerous photographs, plus a brief introduction and conclusion, Gay, with her wide knowledge of theatrical practice, explores the way in which RSC actresses have overcome, adjusted to, or been defeated by the prevailing gender stereotypes and audience expectation of their roles. Having seen only a few of the performances herself, the author relies more on reviews and, more recently, archival videotapes. While she is able to quote from critics such as Michael Billington, who is able to describe performances in a way which often brings us more deeply into the texts being acted, the discussion is the most rewarding when Gay can make her own first-hand assessment: some of the most interesting comments in the book concern John Barton's "British Raj" production of *Much Ado* in 1976, with Judi Dench as Beatrice, where Gay was

troubled by the production's implicit racism, and the 1983 *Measure for Measure*, where her enthusiasm for the acting of Juliet Stevenson comes through: "Stevenson's Isabella was the embodiment of late twentieth-century feminism come of age and accepted into mainstream thinking; her performance enabled audiences to see that a woman's claim for control of her own body is reasonable and normal, and that such autonomy can be a positive force in society" (139). More of this, and less of Irving Wardle, even at the expense of all-inclusiveness, would have made a fine study even better.

The chapter on *Twelfth Night* is, to me, the least successful, perhaps because I have always found the play somewhat tedious; the one on *As You Like It* is outstanding. Of the five roles Gay has chosen, Rosalind is clearly the most hospitable to interrogation of received ideas of femininity, and more than one actress has seized this opportunity. The sheer force of Vanessa Redgrave's personality caused a sensation in 1961, as, and Gay observes, her Rosalind was simultaneous with her growing political activism — "what she was demonstrating on the stage was literally actresses' liberation" (55). Twenty-four years later Juliet Stevenson succeeded in making *As You Like It*, in Stevenson's own words, "a vital exploration of gender, the male and female in us all" (76).

Although Isabella and Rosalind are the only two of the five unruly women she has played at the RSC, Stevenson emerges as the "star" of this book, as her stage talent is matched by the intelligent and articulate way in which she discusses the political dimension she brings to her work. Gay considers Stevenson's Rosalind a "clarion call from one of the new generation of feminist classical actresses, [which] was, astonishingly, ignored in subsequent RSC productions of the play" (82). I find nothing the least bit astonishing about it. For all its "generally leftist image" (5), the Royal Shakespeare Company is, and has been for fifty years, virtually irrelevant to the discourse of Shakespearean performance in

the contemporary theatre. The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, their "main stage" (Shakespeare is hardly ever done in the New Swan), is a nineteenth-century theatre that demands, by its very nature, nineteenth-century Shakespeare, imprisoning its Rosalinds and Beatrices behind a proscenium arch in the outmoded tradition of pictorial realism — it is telling that Gay consistently describes the set design of each production before discussing its acting.

A real revolution in post-war Shakespearean production, still largely unnoticed or contemptuously dismissed in England, began in the 1950s when Tyrone Guthrie, who does not appear in Gay's index, insisted that the Stratford Ontario Festival Theatre's auditorium nearly encircle the stage, forcibly removing Shakespeare from the nineteenth century and relocating him simultaneously in the sixteenth and the twentieth. At the same time, as he noted in his autobiography, Guthrie was "determined to eschew ye olde", and to avoid any suggestion of a Merrie Englands atmosphere for his Stratford Festival. (That is the polite version — I am told, although the story may be apocryphal, that the Irish Guthrie demanded "there will be no hey-nony-nony shite!").

By now North America has upwards of fifty theatres of similar design, largely devoted to the plays of Shakespeare, and it is there that actresses have often seized the opportunity to transgress received notions of gender in Shakespearean comedy. Meryl Streep's extraordinary Katherina at the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1978 opened up *The Taming of the Shrew* to a variety of interpretive possibilities which go far beyond anything done at Stratford; the production could never have occurred in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. A corollary to this point is that one does not have to read very far into *As She Likes It* before it becomes all too clear that the British classical theatre is still unable to shake off the appalling practice it has maintained since the 1600s, having actors (of both sexes) play parts for which they are far too old.

Penny Gay writes so well that I hope her next theatre visits are to North America, where there is a Shakespeare more amenable to her sharp, knowledgeable, and always provocative critical insights. In the meantime, *As She Likes It: Shakespeare's Unruly Women* will do nicely.

Charles Edelman

Gina Mercer, *Janet Frame, Subversive Fictions*, University of Queensland Press, 1994, \$29.95, 294pp.

Influenced by the French writers Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, Gina Mercer portrays Janet Frame as a subversive writer who celebrates the multiple possibilities, the many folds of what French feminists term "le feminin", with Frame's fiction opening the way for "a new language, a new people, a new world", especially the sensitive, emotional and creative possibilities found within the repressed feminine. Mercer takes exception to those critics, many of whom were male, who disliked aspects of Frame's writing for being incomprehensible, incoherent, perturbed, Mercer liking Frame's writing when it "is a lot of trouble, troubling, difficult, subversive, impenetrable", preferring Frame's fiction to her "less liberating", more conservative autobiographies.

Unlike the critic Mark Williams, who used his study of Patrick White to make extensive comparisons between White's work and a number of other writers, especially Malcolm Lowry, Katherine Mansfield and Frame herself, Mercer concentrates totally on Frame, except for a very occasional reference to Beckett and a few other writers such as Mansfield, Virginia Woolf and William Saroyan. Her book is a series of essays on works of Frame. She does not situate Frame in the development of literary form in the twentieth century, which is a pity, as it would have given her book a greater richness and depth,

nor does her work refer in any great length to details of Frame's life, obviously feeling that a reader interested in those details can go to Frame's three volume autobiography. But her work is thorough with an obvious liking for Frame's writing.

Mercer sees Frame as writing from the position of the other, her perspective being that of the outsider, of those on the margins, of what has been repressed, the creative denied expression for centuries, of those who can face "the light" beyond "alphabets and lines and sound".

A small section of her book could have done with some editing. Thus, in chapter thirteen, she includes a lecture given by a critic to an audience of the world's authors including W.B. Yeats. The critic criticises Yeats for his "pomposity", for putting the critic into her respectful place, when she asks a question, while C.K. Stead is not allowed to finish his question. Alice Thumb states that the critic has gone on long enough, a comment that is also true of the book's author. And, early in her book, she states, referring to criticism of Frame's work, that to write more than once about death or insanity is regarded as somehow unhealthy, yet these are concerns that have been central to such major writers as Patrick White and Thomas Mann, being natural concerns of art.

Mercer's study demonstrates how much fear of the arms race and nuclear warfare is part of Frame's fiction, with Frame setting up an alternative of cyclic, female-associated development to that of death-driven concepts of war and "progress". Frame, in her last three novels, was concerned with the effect of American cultural imperialism. Mercer's study will undoubtedly be of interest to scholars and to those readers who want to do more than simply read Frame's work.

Michael Denholm

Ron Davidson, *High Jinks at the Hot Pool* "The Mirror" reflects the life of a city, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994, \$16.95, 240 pp.

Any society which does not keep a record of, and to some degree celebrate its history is doomed to the hell of an eternal present, to repeat its follies as well invent new ones. We in Perth do not have a good record for preserving our heritage, cultural or architectural. Premier David Brand pulled down the wings of one of our oldest buildings, the Pensioner Barracks, before we knew it. Protesters stood their ground about the arch itself, although Brand said it looked pretty ridiculous without the buildings which had sprouted from it. He put his re-election on the line, and lost. So now we can't get a good panoramic view up the Terrace of Coward's Castle, as he wished.

The Perth I walked through as a boy, from the railway station to CBC Terrace (St Malachy's) — and on occasion stopped for a chat by Governor "Moocow" Mitchell — is largely gone. The city built from the economic good times of gold discovery in the 1890s and reaching a peak in the 1930s (somewhat ironically) with Claude De Bernales's kitsch Elizabethan Folly London Court, has given way to downtown Dallas-style glass and concrete monuments to eighties entrepreneurial vanity.

Part of that lost world was *The Mirror*, a mildly salacious late Saturday afternoon newspaper which recorded, and to a degree invented, aspects of our culture from the twenties to the mid-fifties. Ron Davidson, son of one-time editor Frank Davidson, has written a well-researched and very readable history of the paper, and also a shrewdly accurate glimpse of aspects of suburban life in Perth at the time. The paper was eventually closed by new owner Rupert Murdoch in 1956 on the grounds of its scandalous reputation and delight in the slightly sleazy. Odd for a man whose reputation in England includes his penchant for printing bare-breasted beauties on Page Three of afternoon papers

emanating from Fleet Street, which London's satirical *Private Eye* calls "the Street of Sham" (*vide infra*).

The papers which were to become *The Mirror* were bought in 1918/22 by JJ "Boss" Simons and Victor Courtney, the first editor, for a total of £135. In those pre-Murdoch/Packer days, you could buy a small newspaper at that price to air your views: on Secession, White Australia or whatever. The new paper was fiercely Australian and given to sometimes outrageous political attack on eminent figures, such as John Curtin. Racism was overt: the Chinese were called "chinks" and depicted as probably deformed and prone to luring white girls into opium dens. Local "Baden-Powell" Simons was a fervent promoter of the Young Australia League, from which sprang Araluen and those wonderful tulips. He also espoused Aussie Rules football, successfully fought for in the teeth of teachers from England who encouraged the boys to play soccer.

To survive, such small newspapers had to find a gimmick. For *The Mirror*, this was to be the first on the street with the footy and race results. The paper was sold at key points, mainly cinema queues. More was needed, and sensational murder trials were succeeded by a disguised lottery, Money Words. They stood up for unconventional characters such as Percy Button, a vagrant who did tricks in the street for the odd coin. The paper also invented mysterious questionable characters such as the MAN IN THE OVERCOAT (obviously a flasher), then GIRL IN THE OVERCOAT (unlikely, even now: a lady flasher). Each allegedly displayed their wares before pedalling away on a pushbike.

The paper's real bread-and-butter fare was moralistic comment on saucy "social" issues, the sort of thing the more staid establishment paper *The West Australian* would pretend wasn't there, like the allowed row of brothels in Roe Street. When the somewhat prurient Courtney was succeeded as editor by ex-schoolboy league football reporter Frank Davidson, affectionately nicknamed "The Brute", the STREET OF SHAME became the racier RUE DE LA ROE. The articles also

became less stentoracious. For example one dealt with the Council closing down a chicken-butcher business near the brothels because, it was claimed, the squawk of chooks being decapitated put the punters "off their game". The headline ran: WHEN THE ROOSTERS CROW / AT RUE DE LA ROE. Certainly that dull, Sandy Stone time could do with a touch of lighthearted humour.

The yanks in WW II were a godsend, but in their midnight hotpool pranks with flighty Dalkeith society lasses they had to be referred to as "Allied sailors" (their nationality secret, as the Japs might be on the lookout).

But in war or peace, the mainstay of the paper became divorce, rare in those days (a divorced man lived next door to our off-Waratah Avenue home, the talk of the street). Fault had to be proved. The court required precise, objective detail. Shrewd private investigators (such as one Alf Sleep no less) were reported as creeping under windows with a ladder and an aggrieved husband to photograph by flashlight wifey and her lover *in flagrante delicto*. Hence in true *Mirror* alliterative style, such headlines as: WIFE'S HANKY PANKY MADE WANKE CRANKY, and BUTCHER NECK HOPS IN FOR HIS CHOP.

Our parents read the paper, but with genteel hypocrisy refused the kids a peek. In launching the book, the ABC's Peter Kennedy told us his father let him read the football write-ups, but one day he innocently glanced across at a non-sports page and quizzically asked what the word "rape" meant. From that day forth the archival resting-place for the paper became the bottom of Dad's wardrobe.

Ron Davidson has not traced the history of *The Mirror* strictly chronologically, but chosen to treat his subject more by theme: murder trials, Money Words, police-car chases, etc. It makes for an interesting and lively read, bringing a nostalgic tear to the eye of those of us "brought up by hand" in the latter part of that era. The author has recaptured the flavour of the time and done us, and future generations, a genuine service.

Collin O'Brien

CONTRIBUTORS

LISA BELLEAR (NOONUCCAL) works at the Koori Student and Liaison Unit in Carlton, Melbourne.

NICHOLAS BIRNS is book review editor of *Antipodes*, a North American journal of Australian literature. He has published on post-colonial, American and European literature.

RUTH CALLAGHAN has co-edited an anthology of creative writing, and is currently editor of the student newspaper, *The Pelican*, at U.W.A.

HEATHER CAM works for a Sydney publisher, is poetry reviewer for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and author of *The Moon's Hook*.

MICHAEL DENHOLM is author of a two volume history of small press publishing in Australia, and of a forthcoming history of Australian art magazines, 1963 to 1990.

ROSANNE DINGLI is literary editor of *The Western Review*. A collection of her stories will appear early in 1995.

CHARLES EDELMAN is a Lecturer in the English Department at Edith Cowan University, currently working on *Hamlet* for the series, Horizon Studies in Literature.

ALICE FRIMAN is an American who is the author of five poetry collections, the latest of which is *Driving for Jimmy Wonderland* (Barnwood).

KATHRYN GOLDIE is completing an Honours degree in Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong.

CLAYTON HANSEN lives in Freestone on the southern Darling Downs of Queensland, where he is the Principal of the State School.

DALE HARCOTBE lives in the historic village of Millthorpe and has been published in magazines and newspapers in Australia and overseas.

LES HARROP is a professional editor, and director of the Melbourne Writers Group. His poetry collection *The Hum of the Old Suit* won the Anne Elder Award and his first novel *Knight Galah* was shortlisted for the A & R Bookworld prize.

R.G. HAY's most recent book is *It is, It's Finished! A Childhood in Country Queensland*.

RICHARD HILLMAN writes short stories and poetry, and has recently moved from Sydney to Adelaide.

PHILIPPA KELLY is a lecturer in English at the Australian Defence Force Academy. Her research interests are in Shakespeare, postcolonial theory and feminism.

JEAN KENT's first book of poems, *Verandahs*, won the Anne Elder and Mary Gilmore awards. Her most recent book is *Practising Breathing* (Hale & Iremonger, 1991).

CAROLYN LOGAN lives in Fremantle WA and writes novels for children and young adults as well as poetry, short fiction, radio and stage drama.

JUSTIN MACDONNELL lives in Redfern, Sydney.

JOHN MALONE is a South Australian secondary school teacher. A selection of John's poetry appears in *Friendly Street New Poets 1*.

JOHN MATEER was born in Roodepoort, South Africa, in 1971, and has been in Perth since 1984. His volume of poetry *Burning Swans* was published by Fremantle Arts Centre Press in June 1994.

DAVID McCOOEY teaches literary studies at Deakin University.

CATHERINE McIVER lives in Melbourne. She has Multiple Chemical Sensitivity which makes writing and everything else extremely difficult.

STEVEN MILLER completed a Bachelor of Arts in Professional Writing and Literature at Deakin University.

BRONWEN MORRISON was bred but not born in W.A., and has almost completed a B.A. at Curtin University. From there, who knows....

SUE MOSS is a Tasmanian poet and performer. Her collection *The Upwardly Downward Mobility Blues* has recently been published by Penguin.

HEATHER NEILSON is a lecturer in English at University College, The Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra.

DIONNE NEWTON was born in South Africa, immigrated to Perth in 1985, has written and produced works for radio and stage, and just completed her first novel *Trailing Bluebeard*.

COLLIN O'BRIEN teaches at the English Department, UWA.

ALISON PUCHY-PALMOS is one of Western Australia's leading journalists.

DAVID RAY was born in Oklahoma City. He is a well known poet and was editor the literary journal *New Letters* for twenty years.

GRAHAM ROWLANDS is a poetry editor, reviewer and publisher's reader as well as a poet who has published six collections and his *Selected Poems* (Wakefield Press, 1992).

ANDREW SANT is the author of several collections of poetry including *Brushing the Dark*. His most recent book is *Toads*, an edited collection of essays about the relationship between writing and work.

TONY SIMOES DA SILVA is a PhD student at UWA, working in the area of post-colonial literatures.

LEE SPINKS is a Lecturer in English and American Literature at the University of Edinburgh, currently writing a manuscript on Allegory, Space and Colonialism.

RORY STEELE was born in Perth and joined the Australian Diplomatic Service in 1969. He has served in Ghana, Korea, Egypt, Switzerland, and Iraq.

KENNETH STEVEN lives in Scotland. His poetry has been published widely in the USA, Canada, Ireland, Norway and Australia. His first collection is *Remembering Peter*.

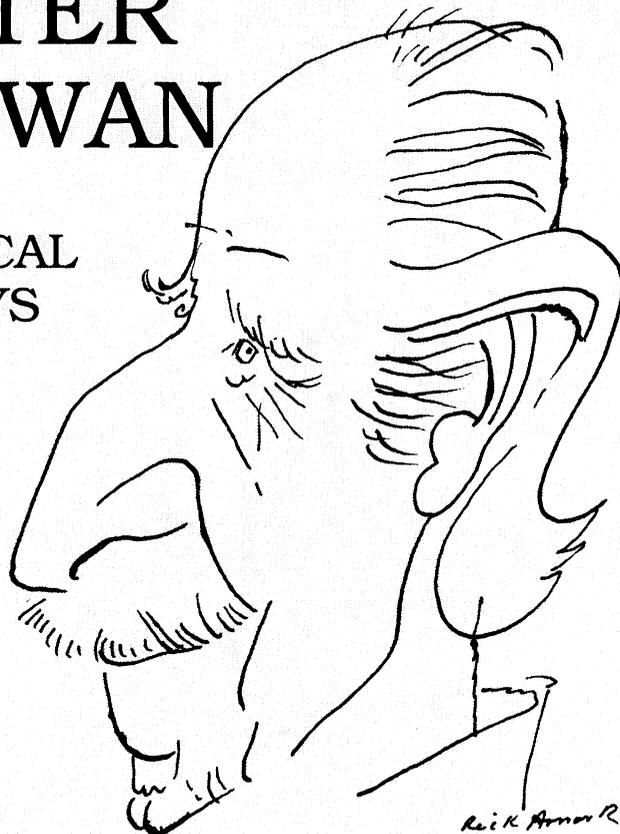
OUYANG YU was born in China, has submitted a PhD in Australian Literature in Australia, and has translated Germain Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1991) and David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter* (1994). A book of his poems is to be published soon.

SPECIAL OFFER TO NEW SUBSCRIBERS

Subscribe to *Westerly* now, or give a gift subscription and you receive a free copy of:

**PETER
COWAN**

**NEW
CRITICAL
ESSAYS**



Edited by
BRUCE BENNETT and SUSAN MILLER

See page 3 of this issue for subscription details.
Offer applied to Australian subscribers only.

POEMS FROM

**Heather Cam, Jean Kent, Bronwen Morrison,
Andrew Sant, Rory Steele, Ouyang Yu**

ARTICLES

**Philippa Kelly on *Cosmo Cosmolino*, Lee Spinks
discusses Patrick White, Nicholas Birns on
Moorehouse's *Grand Days***

STORIES FROM

**Ruth Callaghan, Rosanne Dingli, Carolyn Logan,
Steven Miller**

PLUS

An obituary on Mary Durack, and Reviews

Print Post Approved PP639699/00008

ISSN 0043-342X



9 770043 342009

