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Kathryn Brimblecombe-Fox - "Magic Lady"

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ALL STORMS OR CRYING MA-MA TO THE MOON

By Lesley Singh

The husband is the adventurous type; the sort to take sudden turns.

We are driving along the New England Tableland from Warwick north but instead of continuing on double-lane highway all the way to Brisbane, he turns off, making the dust on the ribbon of dirt fly. The car descends into the Brisbane Valley through terrain where trees fight rocks. What is this place? we wonder. At last there is a sign near a village: Ma Ma Creek.

What a great name! I *have* to put it into a story. I'll have to invent an entirely new story so I can use this name with its powerful resonances of comfort and loss. I kiss my husband like a happy child. 'Ma Ma,' I breathe, turning the words over with my tongue. Travelling through the darkening day with the man I love and a Good Idea in my brain.

Back in my home town of Maleny in the Sunshine Coast hinterland - over 100 kilometres north-east from Ma Ma Creek as the crow flies - I attend a meeting. It is 1991 and Robyn Sheahan from the newly-established Queensland Writers' Centre is coming from Brisbane to address us - some of the so-called 'regional writers of south-east Queensland.' She is ill and doesn't arrive but the meeting goes ahead with optimistic talk of a new era. Across the room I notice a handsome, somewhat rugged-looking man in his forties wearing an interesting jumper. Great colours. The jumper attracts me (as does the man). He writes poetry, he tells us. I think it would be an imperative act of poetry *for someone* to have an affair with *him*. I note the woman sitting beside him. From time to time, they lean their heads together to confer. Is she the owner of the loving hands which created the garment for him? Hmn.

Another scene. A woman waits at the Brisbane International Airport. Her child is small, perched upright in her arms and looking around with bright lantern eyes. He leans against her embrace, intent on the doors which open and release travellers. He is waiting for Daddy. And there he is, this Daddy, coming towards them, smiling hugely, his own eyes wide with pleasure. He has been to New Zealand to attend to the sale of a gold mine in which he has an interest. Two weeks ago he was farewelled and now they have come to collect him.

Clear of Customs, suitcase in hand, Daddy beams and scoops up the laughing child in his arms. An exquisite moment of love, except for one thing: he has not looked at the mother at all. She does not understand this, but the moment passes and a connection is made - she is hugged and they are a family; moving figures in a tide of reunions, flowing out of the airport into the business of everyday life.

As she drives him home, the mother is doing something interesting with her doubts about her happiness with this man. She says soothingly to herself: *love is not excessive or obsessive ... how lovely for the child to receive the primary focus, this is what a stable, mature relationship is about ...* whereas she is really burying her instinct that all is not well between them.

When they arrive home he unpacks presents, a taste of the providence they expect to enjoy when the sale of the gold mine is complete. There are some flashy rock samples, a duty-free bottle of whisky, and a hand-knitted jumper from a craft shop. The jumper is cream, hand-spun wool with a yoke of flowers in shades of mauve. Lichen, says the hand-written label, has been used to make the colour purple.

A beautiful, loving gift.

For me.

All is well, I tell myself. All is well.

The three elements described above - Ma Ma Creek, the rugged-looking man at the writers' meeting, and the jumper from the South Island of New Zealand - form a tripod over which I concoct my brew. I have a grant from Arts Queensland to complete a short story collection, and the one I set in the environs of Ma Ma Creek in the Brisbane Valley pleases me the most. It is about a woman called Bess who knits her husband Jim a jumper, not from a pattern but from her instincts. He wears his wild-coloured jumper (coloured from dyes extracted from eucalyptus leaves) to a meeting of poets, where Leila, a young woman new to town, is attracted to him. Leila, though young, is already afflicted with great loss and Jim becomes caught up in her needs. It is a story of hope.

Place, central character, conflict - or are the elements more archetypal than that? Are they simply: man, woman, desire? (There is another, more secret, ingredient in all my writing brews - the background muse of nearly all my writing efforts - my crutch, my aphrodisiac, my 'nightcap' - the illicit drug, marijuana.) No matter, the story is written. It is about 4000 words in length. I like it.

For most of that year, 1992, it is an amazing effort to write at all. I am alone with a small child. My eldest son is having some time with his father in the U.K. and my husband is working in Far North Queensland in a gold exploration team. He is home for brief visits and is mostly a voice on a telephone receiver or the writer of a fax message. I have no extended family living near me who could call to see me or offer to help. There is a woman I pay to come and play with the child twice a week and a community kindergarten which he attends for a few hours on other days. I don't get anyone to help with the housework or the garden because of the expense. We are saving. The New Zealand gold mine deal went terribly wrong and instead of making us rich, we lost money. To me, the loss seems great, but the husband who thinks in millions of dollars, says this is to be expected in business and you have to put the experience behind you. I know precious little about business but I know about making sacrifices, so I put the losses behind me and do my own housework.

On one of the husband's rare visits, we attend an exhibition at Impact Art in Maleny, a gallery of contemporary art run by artist friends. We are very taken with a beautiful painting. The husband is not only adventurous but generous, and buys it. The artist, Kathryn Brimblecombe-Fox, is a mother and an artist living in Goondiwindi in south-west Queensland. 'Magic Lady' is hung in my writing room. The husband goes back to work.

By the year's end - mothering, writing, gardening, working, working - I am exhausted. I long for my partner. Luckily the geological work is due to finish and after completing some reports at the head office of the company in Sydney, the husband returns. He arrives in the middle of the night swearing about the hire car. He doesn't look at the wife but accuses her of being demanding. Of ruining his job prospects. *She* blurts out, 'But what's happened to all the money?' Earlier that day she has checked with the bank and despite the year's work, the balance of their account shows there is nothing much there. He explodes. The 'good wife' puts his explosion down to work stress and the long drive but when they have sex he is brutal and uncaring. He is obnoxious for weeks.

All this is happening to me. I feel so unhappy with my life I arrange to see a therapist. My husband thinks this is a good idea. Clearly his wife has problems. From childhood. Making her quite irrational.

I make trips to West End in Brisbane and pay the therapist to listen to me talk and cry. For the first time in my life I sense that someone is *hearing* what I am saying. She doesn't contradict me or call me a fool. Her therapeutic methodology is to ask questions or to extend my words through simile. 'It's as if ...' she says, and this prompts me to explore the situation further. And so I tell her about my struggles. One of them is the struggle to create. One afternoon after therapy I go to the Sitting Duck Cafe. It is run by West End anarchists. The food is ghastly and the big *chic* upstairs room is bereft of customers. It is a space conducive to thinking so I sit and think about my Ma Ma Creek story. I realise it is shallow because I have skirted around the question of whether my character Jim, the man in the wild-coloured jumper, actually *has* affairs with any of the women who want him in their lives. In the Sitting Duck Cafe, after therapy, I realize he *does* have a passionate affair with Leila, the troubled young poet. I write notes for several hours then I catch the train home to Maleny.

In therapy I mostly talk about my mother, but then I discover that my husband is having an affair. He met a woman while working on his geological report in Sydney. He tells me he is in love. It is obvious he is in love. It is also obvious that he feels no love for me at all. I am flabbergasted, devastated. Where did it go? How could it go? Why? Why? Who is she? *Who is she?* The lover is described as being fun-loving, vivacious, *undemanding*. They met in a pub on New Year's Eve. She is a social worker from an Italian family of greengrocers. Every year the family business gives out free calendars to customers. For the New Year of 1993, the calendar has a picture *of a prospector panning for gold*. I am expected to see this as they do - an omen for their love.

He is restless and besotted and he drives off. He says it is to see about another gold mine in which we have invested. He takes our small son. He keeps driving. He installs our son who is four in the Sydney bedroom of his lover. When he comes back he tells me he has said goodbye to her.

I no longer believe him. I want to, but he is lying about everything. The lies are like so many snakes in a basket, overflowing and I am trapped in a world where I see the snakes and he says they are not there and that I am mad. He has not said goodbye to the woman. *The truth* is that he has been having affairs ever since our son was born and *long* before that - before we'd even met. Ever since becoming sexually active he has been deceptive. During the course of *our* time together, every time he's been away, he sought an affair. Later he tells me about some of these conquests. One, for example, occurred during the business trip to New Zealand. (A one-night stand with a woman from the pub at Hokitika. Which explained why he could not meet my eyes at the airport). It's as if the hand-made jumper he gave me when he returned - the jumper which inspired the Ma Ma Creek story in the first place - carried with it the vibration of infidelity and this insinuated itself, *wove itself*, into my life and art.

I beg him to tell me the whole truth about his affairs but whenever he attempts it, I go quite insane. Sometimes I swear disgustingly; sometimes I scream and shriek. I want to kill myself. I am overwhelmed with violent thoughts against myself, against the women he has been involved with, against him. (I do not tell a single friend about my troubles.)

It is also a very erotic time. We smoke dope and drink wine or whisky and have passionate sex. The characters from my story, Jim and Bess and Leila, preoccupy us. When he declares, 'Women are the flowers of the species,' I scribble it down and integrate it into my work. As time goes on, the Sydney

woman recedes in importance. (She discovers that he is married. She gets a new lover. I never know what happened between my husband and her. I am not told a thing.) I know it is over when, halfway through the year, my husband designs a slogan for my computer screen. The screen-saver message scrolls across reassuringly: *Jim Comes To His Senses*.

When I first wrung the truth about the Italian woman from him, I could not eat. Whatever I placed in my mouth I spat out. I told this to the therapist. 'It's as if,' she says, taking this revelation into the course of our therapeutic conversation, 'you cannot swallow the fact of your husband's infidelity.' I feared the end of the session when I would have to descend the steps from her room to the whirl of Saturday morning shoppers - in a crowd, yet so alone with my gnawing and impossible hunger. 'I *cannot* eat. *What* can I do?' I pleaded. 'What can I do?' Her face registered a look of uncertainty then she circumvented her carefully maintained discipline of 'as if' prompts and questions.

'Drink things,' she instructed.

I drank milk, then sipped soup, then, as more days passed and he had not left me, I ate again. The therapist saved my life.

All this time I continued to expand the Ma Ma Creek story. It becomes a novella, working title, 'All Storms.' It is swayed by events in my life, particularly my thoughts about fidelity, but there are other influences too, such as Buddhism, Goddess worship, Taoism and the *I-Ching*. Writing is a giddy, debilitating factor in my life (like another drug I am mixing in) but it also gives me a focus. I play at undermining the eternal triangle - two women, one man - by giving Clare, an older woman, the power to intervene. The female figure of Kathryn Brimblecombe-Fox's 'Magic Lady,' has a similar essence. Clare and the 'Magic Lady' calm me. They are imagined beings yet they sustain me.

I also work on the relationship. (I work on that, more than anything.) I love him. I have a child with him. He says he is in the grip of forces from childhood. We start a therapy course for couples in abusive relationships. He says he wants to be a family man and a good husband. I believe he will overcome.

We have run out of money so I must stop seeing my therapist. It's premature but I am high on the victory I have had over the Other Woman. It's a scar that can heal, I say. We manage to find someone to mind our young one and are released for a rare weekend. We travel to the locality of Ma Ma Creek: I want to see if I have the ambience right. We stay overnight at a country pub. I notice how *comfortable* he is in the bar, drinking. This is what he does when working away. He misses it, he tells me, when he's at home. We stay there for a couple of hours. I'd rather be reading but this is what marriage is all about - giving to *the relationship*. Suddenly I am alert: he is making eyes at the barmaid. He denies it. I am instantly on the verge of hysteria. He agrees to leave the bar before closing and downs the glass. Upstairs it is not romantic: soon he is snoring from too much beer.

The next day we walk around looking at landscape. We smoke dope together under some eucalypts. Visit pubs in Gatton. I take notes. I am 'up' again. (I think.)

Sometime that year I turn forty. *When life begins*.

The next year, 1994, I complete my first manuscript- novella and short stories. My husband helps me print it out and it is sent to an editor who has promised to publish it. After some months I see her at a social gathering at the Queensland Writers' Centre. On her way past me, holding a glass of white wine aloof, she says it is not wanted.

Rejection. For that one needs strength but emotionally I am a battered wife. My sense of betrayal by the publisher is *enormous*. One night I think of the creator of the 'Magic Lady.' A phrase or sentence might inspire Kathryn as her work inspired me. I retrieve the novella from the proverbial bottom drawer and send it to her. Then I buckle down and begin research on the novel I've decided to write. *I'm alive again.*

Miracle! Kathryn starts sending me photos of new paintings which spring from her reading of my words. Fifty works on paper later, my husband and I go to visit. It is now June of 1995. Paintings with titles like - *embrace, enchantment, a serious poet, phallic forest* - cover her studio walls. We talk of our marginalisation - as women, as mothers, as regional practitioners - and stubbornly make plans for a collaborative Installation exploring text and image. After visiting Kathryn, I re-read the novella. It shocks me. The editor was right: it *isn't* good enough to publish. The whole narrative method, the whole structure just *doesn't work*. How could I *ever* have made such an error of judgment? I apply the same critical eye to of the stories. Then rewrite. *Fix*. 'Would you like to see it now?' I ask the editor who once rang me with the line: *Send everything quickly. We'll publish it later this year.* 'No,' she says.

Meanwhile, what of that old scar caused by the husband's falling in love, *way back*? It must be fading fast by now, a distant memory of pain that plays up sometimes in the wet? The husband has not been able to leave the scar alone. He doesn't tenderly care for it. Several times he has taken up a sharp little knife and cut into it. Not a whole new deep gash like the Sydney effort but it's as if he is a vampire who has learned to feed on the blood of my pain. And he has become hungry again. This time there's no trip away - there's a drunken visit in the middle of the night to a woman on the other side of town. He *will not* apologise. He *needs* someone to talk to because *living with a woman artist is incredibly - impossibly - difficult*. He is adamant *there is nothing to apologise for*. The cards come tumbling down or, to return to a metaphor from Bess's creative efforts at Ma Ma Creek, the jumper unravels. I find I can no longer live with a Vampire. It is starting to kill me.

We have Christmas in agony; we stumble through into the New Year of 1996. Although he doesn't wish to leave, neither does he wish to change or apologise. Only when I am prepared to get the police to escort him off the premises, does he go. I'm doing something else that's radical. Following a deep, inner instinct I stop smoking dope.

Kathryn is invited to stage her Installation, 'Knitting Time', in September at the White Box Gallery during the 1996 Brisbane Festival before it opens. I sit alone in the white-walled gallery where Kathryn has hung her works and some of my words. Eucalyptus leaves are strewn on the floor and their late evening aroma brings a deep peace. I am surrounded by works I helped inspire, an experience humbling and empowering. At the opening people ask, 'Where can I buy the book?' 'You can't,' I answer serenely. 'Can't get a publisher.' Playing the persecuted writer to the hilt.

My husband is not there. The novella was so much part of us both, but he has made his choice - the woman on the other side of town - and I have made mine. (*No triangle. Thank-you.*) Very few friends come along. When couples break up, people steer clear. After the show, Kathryn gives me a painting

called 'Adventurous Journey.' It's her interpretation of my sassy character Leila. 'You'll be alright,' she says.

I congratulate myself for having the courage to end things, but wonder: why is there so much grief? I begin my new book but there are days when I achieve nothing. What preoccupies me is how love can deteriorate into a repulsive situation. I wrestle and wrestle with the past, trying to find what tore us up so often. In 'Rinse the Blood Off My Toga,' the spoof of Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* created by 1960s comedy team Wayne & Schuster, Flavius Maximus, private eye, tries to work out why so many Romans, starting with Big Julie himself, are being bumped off. Suddenly it dawns - *whenever there's a stiff, Brutus is always there*. 'Suddenly I looked up,' says Flavius Maximus, 'and there was Brutus.'

What was always present in our marriage crises was alcohol and dope. Epiphany. 'We're a couple of washed-up Bohemians,' I tell him. 'You might be washed-up. *I'm not,*' he replies.

Today the road from the New England Highway via Ma Ma Creek is bitumenised. It has been discovered by interstate truckers as a short-cut from Sydney to Brisbane. I like driving on it: it's part of my dreaming, peopled by my ghosts. In 'All Storms' Bess and Jim stay together but I have my doubts. *If Jim keeps on drinking and smoking dope they won't last long*, I mutter to myself darkly. *They've got Buckley's*. As for my old hope that I live in a new era for Queensland writers, I'll leave others to talk that one up - I'm too busy working on survival to lift my head to declare a new age. But today there are some certainties: I have a beautiful novella (okay, so no-one wants to publish novellas); I have come through pain (okay, so it revisits sometimes and part of me is always crying Ma-Ma to the moon); I have begun a new life without alcohol and marijuana. (There's a whole population living without intoxicants - would you *believe* it?) The serene 'Magic Lady' blesses me and the sassy young woman of 'Adventurous Journey' encourages me to go on. I understand that it is impossible to force my will on a situation. I have to accept everything. Everything. Anyway, I have a novel to write.

Lesley Singh completed a novel about Lasseter and was awarded an MA in Creative Writing from the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at The University of Queensland in 2001. The 'All Storms' collaboration between the writer and the painter awaits further exposure.

BODIES POLITIC

Generation f: Sex, Power and the Young Feminist. By Virginia Trioli. Port Melbourne: Minerva, 1996.
DIY FEMINISM, Kathy Bail ed., St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen and Unwin, 1996.

The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement 1950s-1990s. By Gisela Kaplan. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996.

By Judy McVey

Where has feminism been, and where is it going? Over the past few years a debate has been raging among feminists, one that seems to have led to a revision of the feminist project. Once seen as a network of activists, feminism is in crisis, with one section - postfeminism - going so far as to argue that women are no longer oppressed.

The postfeminists' arguments merge with those of rightwing anti-feminists, both blaming the women's movement for the remaining inequality between men and women. Women would not be unequal if they adopted a new confident attitude and rejected many of the complaints of current feminism, the argument goes.



It's a long way from the first days of the Women's Liberation Movement, which was influenced by revolutionary socialists and radical feminists, both arguing for social change and collective action. While middle class reformism or liberal feminism has always been a strong influence, it appears nowadays to be the main voice, if the recent literature is any guide.

I want to look back at three Australian books. Virginia Trioli's *Generation f* and Kathy Bail's collection of articles in *DIY FEMINISM* are written by younger women, defending the individual activity of a range of Australian feminists. The third book - *The Meagre Harvest* - is a study of the Australian women's movement by a longterm feminist, Gisela Kaplan.

But first some background. The open debate began in Australia in 1995 around Helen Garner's *The First Stone*. This book was written about the incidents at the University of Melbourne, when two female students accused the Master of Ormond College of sexual harassment. Eventually the women went to the police, who charged the Master. He was acquitted, on appeal, but resigned from Ormond. Garner supported the Master, asking whether this was 'what feminism had mutated into - these cold-faced, punitive girls'.

Completely ignoring the class differences between a college master and student, and saying they held equal power, she put the onus on young women to use their personal feminine skills to avoid unpleasantness. For Garner, the Ormond College events were not sexual harassment, rather sexual attention, which if unwanted could have been resolved without recourse to the law.

In a speech to the rightwing Sydney Institute, Garner took the issue further, implying women are often to blame for sexual harassment by 'pretending that it means nothing at all to wear, say, a low-necked dress in a bar at 2am'.

Following in the footsteps of American writer Naomi Wolf, who argued in *Fire With Fire* in 1994 that women were no longer oppressed and feminism needed to junk 'victim feminism', Garner's targets were those so-called 'victim feminists', the radical feminists who dominated feminism in the 1980s and who campaigned to increase penalties for violence against women.

The debate that followed took place in the mainstream media, and saw famous Australian feminists line up on both sides. Missing were representative voices from the younger generation, yet the debate was portrayed as punitive anti-male young women against wiser, older feminists. In March 1995 Anne Summers, writing in the *Good Weekend* magazine, challenged so-called 'third wave' feminists to give a perspective of 'how life seems through twentysomething eyes'.

In 1996 Virginia Trioli, a journalist at the *Age*, responded to Garner, defending the students. Her book, *Generation f*, is mostly devoted to defending the new generation of feminists, and in so doing, she reveals a very conservative middle class feminism. She argues that, while today's feminists are not on the streets as much in rallies and demonstrations, they are 'ambitious and politically sophisticated young women working in the law, health, education, finance, the arts, the private sector and trade unions ... applying the principles of their feminisms'.

About the same time, *DIY FEMINISM* appears, edited by *Rolling Stone's* Australian editor, Kathy Bail. While this is a broad collection of articles, Bail argues: 'Now feminism is largely about individual practice and taking on personal challenges rather than group identification.'

The debate in Australia remains confused about how much to adopt postfeminist arguments. Some contributors in *DIY FEMINISM* rail against Wolf and Garner. Kathy Kenny recognises: 'The achievements of some women can obscure the costs borne by women in general,' and that Wolf and Garner's feminism is an attack on women and feminism. She argues that the perceived popularity of this new feminism was really the mainstream media promoting the debates: 'Denouncing feminism has been granted new life by being carried out by those who claim to be feminists themselves.'

Despite their differences over how to deal with sexual harassment, all these writings promote feminism as a struggle by women against men - a project for individuals, not collectives. However, the debate is not just over strategy, but also the nature of the battle-liberal feminists in the US are making a clear argument that women are no longer oppressed. There are strong indications that some Australian liberal feminists may head this way.

Kathy Bail makes clearer, more overt, arguments than most, pointing out that young middle class women today do not need feminism. 'Somehow I just took the notion of equal opportunity in my stride in my teens and never thought I would be in any way disadvantaged as a woman.'

The genderquake myth

It is not the first time prominent feminists have hit out at the feminist movement. In her 1991 publication, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*, American feminist Susan Faludi reported that feminists Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan and Susan Brownmiller all publicly blamed feminism for many of the problems of women.

Naomi Wolf's attack has been more successful because she does not just criticise but provides an alternative - Power Feminism. *Fire With Fire* presents a vision of a new era for women after the

'genderquake' of the early '90s. That was when Bill Clinton got elected, partly on the women's vote, in 1992 and Anita Hill, who accused Clarence Thomas, nominee for the Supreme Court, of sexual harassment, was able to force US society to take her claims seriously. Wolf argues that Paul Keating's unexpected election win in 1993 was the result of a high pro-ALP vote among women.

Wolf is right to see a line has been crossed ... for her class. While most working class women have not even achieved equal pay, middle class women are more likely to be becoming bosses and politicians, often on equal pay and conditions. Since the 1970s in Australia and elsewhere there have been important improvements for professional and middle class women. *The Australian Women's Year Book*, released in May 1997, reported that:

- * More women (344,200) than men (289,900) were studying at a higher education institution in 1996.
- * An equal proportion of men and women hold a degree or higher qualification.
- * The number of women setting up their own business is growing by 3 per cent per year, more than 1.5 times the rate for men.
- * Women are now 19 per cent of senior executives in the Commonwealth Public Service, compared with 6 per cent in 1986.

Such results are prevalent across the western world, providing the material basis for the new feminist ideas. For Wolf, the 'genderquake' showed that, with new attitudes and confidence, women, all women, can easily complete the victory of full equality. This is why, for Wolf, 'victim feminism' is counter-productive - women are not oppressed anymore, no longer victims, no longer powerless. Instead of emphasising powerlessness, women should recognise their power and use it in battle with men.

Now, there was always a problem with feminism emphasising women as victims, because women have never just been victims, but also fighters. However, Wolf is saying that women and men are virtually on a level playing field and if women don't succeed, it's their own fault. But is it really the case that women are no longer oppressed?

A Meagre Harvest

The third book I want to look at is helpful in answering this question because it is a serious assessment of the women's movement from 1950-90. *The Meagre Harvest*, published in 1996 by feminist historian Gisela Kaplan, states: 'The success for some Anglo-Celtic, Australian-born and largely middle-class women has indeed been impressive. But for all the others, it cannot be described as anything but a meagre harvest.'

The results of the women's movement are ambiguous for Kaplan. On the one hand there have been gains: women are no longer expected to be just housewives and mothers, but can and do have careers; women have the right to vote and obtain credit; anti-rape and sexual harassment laws have been strengthened; refuges and other support for single mothers exist; divorce does not carry the old stigma which tied women to unhappy marriages.

But on the other hand: 'The problem is that social and economic policies...[are] often diametrically opposed.' Anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation passed in the 1980s was limited, and

'...hardly has one good piece of legislation been put in place before economic `reality' undoes it at the level of practice.' She argues that enterprise bargaining, restructuring and deregulation in the 1980s and '90s has played a major role in undermining women's income and therefore women's equality.

Kaplan cites a series of statistics to show that women's income is still way below men's; some of her sources assess women's average income as low as 45 per cent of men's. Among full-time workers, women still only rate 82 per cent of men's income. While women's participation in the paid workforce is increasing (from 36 per cent of all women in 1966 to 52 per cent in 1992), and women are now 42 per cent of the total workforce, family poverty is increasing.

There are many other indicators that women are oppressed, including the state's concern to control women's bodies. There are still draconian laws against abortion, even in so-called democratic western countries. Despite recent survey results indicating the success of trials for the abortion pill RU486 in Australia, it continues to be banned by the Coalition.

It is clear that despite the gains for women over the past 20 years they are still disadvantaged - and that the basis for women's oppression, which lies in the organisation of family life, has not been fundamentally challenged, especially for working class women who remain the majority.

The capitalist family provides the material basis for the oppression of women. Because the majority of women continue to perform unpaid labour in the home for little recognition, all women are expected to accept unequal status. Naomi Wolf and the postfeminists have not shown that this situation has been challenged, let alone eliminated. They have proven only that middle class women have made gains.

The feminist dilemma

The crisis in feminism is a direct result of the weakness of the feminist strategy. Kaplan's assessment of the Australian women's movement's strategy is ambivalent: on the one hand, she recognises the success of the 'femocracy' 'secondwave feminists: have forged an organisational network which has managed to infiltrate government and national institutions and in doing so achieve attitudinal changes of some magnitude.' However, the women's movement 'has not managed to infiltrate areas of hard-core decision making such as taxation and economic planning.'

One of the major weaknesses of the movement was and remains internal division. Kaplan is especially critical of the class and cultural biases of the mainstream movement: she maintains that both Aboriginal and migrant women were excluded except as 'tokens'. And she is especially critical of the 'feminist academic ivory-tower league...increasingly...linked neither to social change nor to progressive social responsibility...[and] mainly white, middle-class, part of the dominant culture and educated at the best schools.'

Postmodernism comes in for strident criticism because 'it turns its back on the very question that started the movement: that of equality'. '[T]he logical conclusion of [postmodernism's] withdrawal from any binding ethical framework...is that Hitler's *Mein Kampf* becomes no more or less valid or interesting as a text than the *Kama Sutra*, Marx's *Capital* or the Bible. Such relativism...moves against social justice, equality, the rights of minorities, participatory democracy and the like.'

Sisterhood - an alliance of women across classes - has not worked to benefit working class women, and won't be any use in fighting back against the Right. That's the key lesson from Gisela Kaplan's book.

'[O]ne may speculate that the women's movement in Australia has been...a protest by the upper (well-educated) echelon of middle-class women. Enlisting working class women in their struggle lent weight to the cause, but did it benefit working class women? I see no evidence of this.' Unfortunately, she offers no real alternative to this alliance.

It was the early years of the second-wave movement that most benefited working class women. According to Kaplan: 'The underlying vitality of the women's movement in Australia was maintained by radical demands for a redistribution of wealth.' The struggle for equal pay, childcare and abortion rights was fought as part of the wider working class movement. In fact, men and women unionists united to fight for equal pay before the women's movement began.

As this wider struggle declined, the women's movement turned towards separatism and a radical feminism which was based on the theory of patriarchy. As Kaplan points out, while all women gained something with the improvements to women's status, the 1980s were years of erosion of working class living standards.

The femocrats working for the 1980s Labor government seemed to have missed the economic attacks being carried out on women workers by that same bureaucracy. Speaking about the shift to economic rationalism, she comments: 'some feminists may well be unaware how much they themselves have become part of this thinking.'

Especially for liberal feminism, women's oppression is reduced to inequality within their own class, and women's liberation reduced to winning that equality under capitalism. Little wonder that the middle class postfeminists can now assert their politics. For many of these women, they seem to be on the way to full equality.

A fundamental change in society is necessary to remove the cause of women's oppression and to allow a new organisation of the family that is not based on the unpaid labour of women. However, such a change will not succeed without the greatest unity between men and women workers. Socialists argue that we need to begin the fightback today - in the everyday struggles of workers for better conditions at work and in society. Victorian nurses recently won 224 new jobs, paid maternity leave, an 11 per cent pay rise and minimum shift length - all without trade-offs. To do so required industrial action and unity among women and men from many different backgrounds. Women are now a permanent part of the workforce like never before. As such we are unionists and pickets - a power to be reckoned with.

Sex games

Fire With Fire marked a shift to the right in 1994 for Naomi Wolf, who had established her feminist credentials with *The Beauty Myth* in 1990. The shift has become a slide with her new position in opposition to abortion and her call to combine with rightwing anti-abortionists to find a way to reduce the number of abortions.

Some postfeminists go even further: Katie Roiphe's, *The Morning After*, for example, argues that date rape is a figment of feminists' imagination: 'There is a grey area in which someone's rape may be another person's bad night.' Many of us thought we had had these debates out in the '70s and early '80s when, after much campaigning, judges and police and the media were forced to take women's claims more seriously. It's only a few years since most women's marches were dominated by the slogan: 'However we dress, wherever we go, yes means yes, no means no.'

Now liberal feminists are promoting sex as the main arena for the sex battle. No longer do they want sex to be associated with negative problems like rape and sexual harassment. Rather, as Wolf's latest book, *Promiscuities*, argues, women must use their female sexuality confidently, promoting the 'inner slut' in women - the key tactic for the modern battle between the sexes. Here, Power Feminism meshes with the most rightwing of the postfeminists - women can find liberation through sexuality. Any woman can do it. In the words of the Spice Girls, that's 'Girlpower'. Susan Estrich, top expert on rape law and first woman president of the *Harvard Law Review*, illustrates the new feminist tactics with her new screenplay. It's about a prostitute who teaches her girlfriends erotic techniques to lure men and hang on to them. *New York Times* writer Maureen Dowd reported in the London *Guardian* (July 8, 1997) that Estrich stated she wanted to explore the issues of feminism through the 'classic male form' of the hooker, 'not the hooker as victim, but the hooker as a person who is possessed of great power and knows how to use it'.

This is a tremendous shift from the positive aggression of the early women's movement and images of burning bras (symbolic of removing the restrictions on women's lives, rather than to be taken all that literally). Now liberation for women is equated with sexual liberty, but a sexual liberty treats men as women have been treated, making them into sex objects. The strategy is based on the notion that women have power as individuals equal to men, regardless of their class position, but they can only exercise that power with the appropriate assertive attitude.

Socialists welcome sexual liberation, openly discussing sexuality, as a step forward. It makes it more difficult for the Church to keep the wraps on sex and human relationships. We want a more open society in general. However, objectifying human bodies, male or female, reflects the lack of sexual freedom. Sexual freedom is not possible without real freedom based on real control over our lives.

Power is not inherent in sexual prowess, rather it lies in our ability to own or control wealth. Middle class women begin to feel powerful as individuals as they gain positions in society - they can realistically become politicians and company directors, and wield real power even as individuals. These women may be able to create the illusion of sexual equality, but it is totally unrealistic to assume that working class women or men have individual power. Even if tiny numbers of middle class women can play these sex games, it merely reinforces the old gender stereotypes which the women's movement used to be united in rejecting. It is equally ridiculous for Helen Garner to expect that the two students use the same power in sexual encounters as the Master of Ormond College. Individual working women (and men) and students have power only when they unite in collective action.

Further, under capitalism, competing sexually demands the right stereotypical appearance, and you need money for that. Even if you're good at it, how does a better sex life translate into better jobs and higher living standards? Changing your lifestyle may be a realistic strategy for the middle class but it can't win equality and liberation for workers. Worse, it can divert workers away from the real source of liberation by maintaining artificial divisions between men and women workers.

The individualism of this sexual battle encourages assertiveness but there is a difference between the assertiveness of women which develops out of political awareness and collective struggle - strikes and demonstrations - and the assertiveness of competitive individual women.

However, working class women could never be satisfied with just equality - should any working woman accept the limits of the life and living standards of the working class male? What is so desirable

about poorer health, shorter life expectancy, greater pressure to do unwanted overtime, and the constant stress over getting or keeping a job that characterises the lives of so many working class men?

Inequality is just one aspect of the problems for working women: just think about the woman worker, spending perhaps 40 hours on work at home after working 40 hours in the factory or office. Middle class women can afford childcare and cleaners and domestic help. While more men are doing housework, it is women who tend to take on this burden whether or not they are also holding down a paid job. This situation cannot be turned around by making an equal number of men do the child-rearing. It is often the case that, because men's wages are higher and they have more access to overtime and even full-time jobs, the couple plan that he works and she stays home. These practices are built into the system. We have the resources to eliminate the drudgery of housework for men or women. But it would mean the state providing for these tasks - and for capitalists this would be an insupportable drain on profits.

At its heart, feminist theory cannot deal with a society divided by class. The notion that all women can unite was always wrong: even though women of the ruling class suffer oppression as women, they also benefit from the divisions and inequalities among working people. In other words, they benefit from women's oppression.

So, in 1993, when Margaret Jackson was the only female board member of BHP, she had to fight to be allowed to wear trousers to work. But she never defended working women suffering under enterprise bargaining. And where was her sisterhood for the working class women of Newcastle?

Conclusion

Socialists reject the underlying assumption of much feminist theories - that male domination is to blame for women's oppression. The highest points of the struggle against oppression have coincided with the high points of class struggle. The best example still remains the Russian revolution, from 1917 to 1924. One of the first steps of the new workers' government was to abolish legal inequality between men and women, including granting equal wages. A serious attempt was made to socialise all elements of childcare and housework, and abortion was legalised. Laws against homosexuality were repealed and marriage was made a voluntary act, with either partner able to dissolve it.

The attack on feminism from the right, as well as much of the new 'individualist' theory, is an attack on its fighting aspects and an attack on the gains of the Women's Liberation Movement. Socialists therefore defend those aspects of feminism which recognise that women are oppressed and that there needs to be a fightback against the whole system.

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MIDDLE AGE SPREADING

The Feel of Steel. By Helen Garner. Sydney: Picador, 2001.
Reviewed by Cath Darcy.

Helen Garner's work has always drawn heavily on her life, and *The Feel of Steel* is no exception. In its 31 non-fiction pieces, a picture develops of the state of mind of this woman author nearing sixty. But Helen Garner's world view is more than just her own: it is the voice of a particular generation of artists and social activists who have now reached middle-age. As in all of Garner's books, her prior history as a radical in Melbourne's 1970s counter-culture underlies the narrative and places her current observations in a socio-historical trajectory. Her passing references to 'long-ago acid trips', her 'old hippie instinct', and to bringing up her daughter 'with her own bare hands, back in seventies Fitzroy when people slung their kids on the back of their pushbikes and zoomed away' remind us that Garner exists in Australian public culture as a talisman of that social and historical milieu. The narrator of *The Feel of Steel* is less the private individual Helen Garner than *Monkey Grip*'s Nora, twenty-four years on.



Throughout her career Garner has been candid about the relationship between her life and the world within her fiction. Her books chart the development of a certain type and generation of feminist through life. Through her female protagonists we can trace the shifts within her feminism, from the idealism of the 1970s, through the disillusionment of the 80s, to the self-blame of the 90s when feminism was seen to have contributed to the emotional barrenness of the forty-something double-divorcee: 'What have you women *done* to yourselves?' asked a male character in *The Last Days of Chez Nous*. 'You're like husks' (54). This frustration with feminist ideology found its way into *The First Stone* where, despite her clear struggle to resist attacking the young women involved in the Ormond case, Garner nevertheless accused them of puritanism, punitiveness and naivety. The author constructed herself as a 'feminist pushing fifty' who had learnt a compassion and sympathy from life that was foreign to young university feminists. The extensive commentary on *The First Stone* made it clear that not all of those who shared Garner's milieu in the 70s shared her politics in the 1990s. The author is nevertheless commonly seen as an icon of that era, particularly by other former hippies who have achieved similar levels of cultural cachet in the contemporary cultural and political mainstream.

Although it continues heavily to inflect her reputation in 2001, Garner has left *The First Stone* and its difficult engagement with contemporary feminist politics behind in *The Feel of Steel*. A consciousness of gender relations underlies the narratives as always, but it is expressed passively here, through gentle observation. In 'Tower Diary', for example, she writes of her friend's observation of Greek dancing, where one dancer supports the weight of another's 'gyrations':

'Yes,' says A.G. later, 'but I've seen women doing the supporting. You see them –' (she mimics a small person, teeth gritted, eyes squinting, shoulders bent sideways under a weight) '– while the bloke –' (mimes a carefree, vain, casual frolicking and leaping). 'It's an image of the whole man/woman thing, in Greece.'

Not only in Greece.

The experience of ageing as a social phenomenon is a newer concern in Garner's work. She writes prolifically of her newfound status as 'nanna', and of encounters with young people: drunken boys at a train station who respectfully tone down their language and raucous behaviour in her presence; entertaining her nine year old nephew waiting in the Fracture Clinic at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital with her old and demented mother; a trio of young women in her apartment building replying to Garner's greeting 'mechanically, without even glancing up'. She fights against the expectation that women of her age will 'drop their aesthetic bundle', and continues to wear light-coloured and 'feminine' designer dresses on special occasions, to learn fencing, attend a 'Male Revue' where she finds herself scrambling onto a table for a better view, and partake of fasting and colonic irrigation at a Thai health spa. She feels like a 'daggy bodyguard' in the foyer at opening night of the Melbourne Film Festival while she babysits her granddaughter for her actress daughter, but she is joyous at the realisation that although she and friends of her age 'are not old yet, our youth has been over for a long, long time.'

The disgust Garner experiences regarding her mother's slow decline adds a further dimension to this thinking about the process of ageing. She unselfconsciously describes her inner struggle to deal with her mother's emotionally draining illness, expressing feelings that most people would be too restrained to make public:

There are days when she grumbles so relentlessly that the drone of her voice gets into my bones and drains the joy out of everything. Then it's all I can do not to smother her with a pillow, or tip her out of her wheelchair into the lake and hold her head under with my boot. She is as unaware of my mutinous fury as if she were an empress on a throne. Her children confess these murder fantasies to each other, and double up in silent spasms of relief: without laughter it would all be completely unbearable.

In her characteristic way she makes, in passing, pertinent social comment on the 'ludicrous staffing levels' at her mother's aged care facility, which 'leave her, at times, neglected in the physical squalor of her condition'. She also rails against the 'indignities' to which the old woman is subjected as someone takes advantage of her dementia, stealing not only her knee rug and spectacles, but also her false teeth.

While the narrative voice of these stories might appeal primarily to the generation whose life experiences have often paralleled Garner's, *The Feel of Steel's* allure is not limited to this. The experiences recounted are not all age or gender specific. Stories about the pain of a broken heart, the intense jealousy sometimes involved in loving deeply, the cultural ritual of the football grand-final and the preparation for being a bride, speak to a wide range of readers, as do Garner's musings about a sense of place and the 'appalling infiniteness' of email. As with the rest of Garner's oeuvre, however, the narratives are heavily middle-class, heterosexual and white. As I struggle to make ends meet at the age of twenty-six, working at low-paying casual jobs and engaging in a fortnightly battle with Centrelink, I feel far removed from the world of grandmas in designer dresses and custom-made shoes, tripping to the Opera. But the stories in this collection do speak to me. The chronicle of Garner's elderly mother's slide into Alzheimer's resonates as I watch my partner's grandmother slowly being devoured by a similar dementia, and 'Tess Bows Out' drew tears as I remembered my own dog's death from baiting. I shared the experience of Susan Wyndham reading this book, who was 'knocked out by the power and beauty of her writing, often about subjects as flimsy as a pair of gold sandals. In her hands, the death of a dog is as moving as her mother's decline, and her seduction by an optometrist into buying a pair of blue glasses is excruciating' (Wyndham, *SMH Spectrum* 18-19 August 2001, 7). There are some

moments, however, where the endings to the stories seem forced, when Garner appears to feel obliged to end 'on a point'. Perhaps this is a side-effect of the form – many of these pieces were originally published in the author's weekly column in *The Age*. Or maybe Garner is playing with genre. The clichéd conclusion to 'Who Spilt the Wine?' suggests that the author is emulating the fable form.

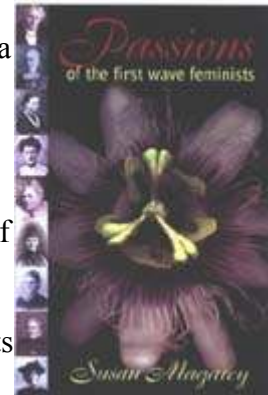
Above all, this is an optimistic book in which Garner appears to have recovered from the trauma she experienced in the wake of *The First Stone*, including the demise of her third marriage (to writer Murray Bail). Although it is the third book published since 1995, it is the first to include any work written after that year, and suggests the possibility that Garner will continue to produce quality writing about the everyday well into the future.

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FORGOTTEN FEMINISMS

Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*. Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001;
Kerreen M. Reiger, *Our Bodies, Our Babies: The Forgotten Women's Movement*. Melbourne:
Melbourne University Press, 2001.
Reviewed by JaneMaree Maher

Women's capacity to reproduce has always attracted feminist attention. That attention has ranged from activism of many types, through sociological analyses of birth and mothering to philosophical examinations of maternity and its meaning. There has always been a diversity of approaches to the role that maternal politics plays in feminist emancipatory projects. This diversity is represented in these two very different accounts of women's activism in Australian history. In Susan Magarey's *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* and Kerreen Reiger's *Our Bodies, Our Babies: The Forgotten Women's Movement*, we are offered two historically distinct accounts of how women's reproductive capacities have shaped and been shaped by the Australian social and political landscape. Magarey examines how the discourses of health, both sexual and reproductive, influenced the activities and achievements of first wave feminist movements in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia. Reiger examines how the maternal consumer movements of the 1960s and 1970s have impacted on the delivery of birth services in the Australian health system. Although both accounts focus on health and the body, they reveal the widely divergent feminist politics that animated these movements and their differing aspirations.



Magarey's *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* examines the Australian Woman Movement as it agitated for suffrage for women in the new Australian Federation. Arguing that the Foucauldian lens which foregrounds the hystericisation of women's bodies can be usefully integrated with the 'testosteronisation of men's bodies in the Australian context (3), *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* examines how these factors impacted on the political mobilisations of the Woman Movement. For her study, Magarey uses published journals like Louisa Lawson's *Dawn*, letters exchanged between prominent women inside the Movements and novels, as well as more conventional sources like Government reports. Such a diverse array of material allows for a rich and complex account of the first wave feminists and their goals. *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* charts the various debates around sexual purity, love and marriage that formed the background for the development of the Australian Woman Movement. This framework allows for a detailed exploration of how important sex, sexual relations and the sexual double standard were to the first wave feminists and their political activities. The centrality of such 'health discourses' in the political landscape of the emerging nation, and the activity of the first wave feminists in arguing for contraceptive and sexual health, demonstrates their commitment to redefining 'the sexual labor of wives and mothers as labour' (101). These concepts of sexual purity and health are extended to an exploration of the role the scientific accounts of evolution played in the construction of discourses and political positions on the question of women's role in public life. Some evolutionary discourses worked to confine women inside the domestic sphere while others, in direct contrast, argued that women's movement into public life must be encouraged on the basis of their greater 'natural' access to altruism.

Magarey also documents the splits and changing allegiances that led to the formation of various different women's organisations within the broader sphere of the Woman Movement. The importance of

challenging traditional hierarchies for feminists like Rose Scott, a founding member of the Womanhood Suffrage League (WSL), is contrasted with the personal and political investments of activists like Lady Windeyer, who moved on from the WSL to the Women's Christian Temperance Union. 'Political solidarity on the basis of sex' (57) was put under pressure by differing approaches to the status of marriage and class solidarity. In the move toward Federation and suffrage, Magarey argues that such differing allegiances were further refracted through the politics of race, where the sexual inclusiveness of citizenship in the new Australian nation was gained through the exclusion of non-white Others, emblematised in the legislative passage of the White Australia policy (155).

The exploration of developing women's economic independence as they moved into industries like typography in the 1890s, is followed by an analysis of the legislative limitations to such independence that emerged in the period after Federation. The activities of arbitration courts and trade unions in embedding wage structures in discourses of natural sexual divisions of labor demonstrates that these measures, while contributing to Australia's status as the 'working man's paradise' had other implications for women. 'Once again...the principal means to a livelihood ha[d] become...for the majority of women...trading possession of their bodies in marriage' (139). The activities of census bureaucrats in re-defining waged labour and domestic activity to women's disadvantage is shown to have lingered long in Australian analyses of women's contributions to the economy of the nation.

Passions of the First Wave Feminists argues that feminist politics as expressed in the Australian Woman Movement were a significant part of the changing demographic configurations that resulted in declining birth rates at the turn of the Twentieth Century. For Magarey, 'the Australian family transition' is not caused, as such, by feminist activism. Rather, she argues that 'the Woman Movement's argument gave expression to a desire that was even more widely spread than those expressed in feminist debates', a desire for change in women's reproductive health, in enforced maternity and the transmission of sexual diseases (115). As such, birthrate debates resurface a century later, and their relationship to women's public and private roles is again a key matrix in public discourse on reproduction; this nuanced exploration of such cultural movements and influences has striking resonance. The reading of official reports through the lens of other cultural artefacts such as journals, letters and novels give body to Magarey's expressed desire to locate her work in a conversation between 'History and Cultural Studies' (20). *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* demonstrates the value and strength of such a conversation.*

Our Bodies, Our Babies: The Forgotten Women's Movement offers an account of the development of the maternity reform movement in the Australian context. It engages with what author Kerreen Reiger identifies as the contradiction between the attempt 'to make the birth of a newborn baby a warmer and more "humane" process, ... [and] ... the escalation of technical management and professional expertise' in the birth process. It does so through a history and analysis of grassroots reform movements where the development of the notion of consumer rights in the delivery of birth services and its relationship to the broader movement and feminist ideals is examined. The organisations considered include the Nursing Mothers Association of Australia (NMAA), and other groups such as Childbirth Education Association (CEA) and Childbirth and Parenting Association (CPA).

The relationships and conflicts between professional expertise, maternal knowledge and consumer power are key axes of analysis in this text. Drawing on interviews and survey material, organisational minutes and educational material produced by various organisations, *Our Bodies, Our Babies* offers a detailed examination of how notions of 'motherhood as experience' drew on and conflicted with

feminist aspirations. As the title, with its reformulation of the famous slogan of the Boston Women's Health Collective indicates, the relationship of other feminist projects to the revaluation and assertion of motherhood and birth as fundamental and valued experiences is of key interest here. *Our Bodies, Our Babies* takes the primacy of the 'personal is political' in the development of women's liberation and examines how that was translated into maternity reform politics in the Australian context.

Our Bodies, Our Babies charts the changing missions and philosophy of the birth reform movements throughout the course of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Reiger explores how the emphasis on psychoprophylaxis (which trained women in the ability to disengage from the painful sensations of birth) was a key impetus in early reforms. Later, this gave way to a focus on working inside the body and its experience. Later still, and perhaps reflective of the lessening prominence of movement-based reform, there was greater concentration on choice. Such developments can be seen in relationship to changing feminist aspirations across those decades although the relationship between feminism and the childbirth reform movement was complex. As Reiger argues, there was a lack of attention to maternity politics in many second wave feminist developments, and this impacted on how women in the birth reform movement saw feminism. In Reiger's view, they were at once 'quite responsive to feminist ideals and strongly committed to women's choices and autonomy', while maintaining some distance in order to pursue their own projects (171).

Reiger argues that the models for change that were adopted, most particularly by NMAA, can be characterised to some extent as 'maternalist'; she also documents the strategies by which such groups constructed their platforms and agitated for change. Drawing on their 'expertise' as mothers, while strategically engaging powerful advisers, allowed the NMAA in particular to gain acceptance as legitimate contributors to the educational process for women and to be called on as a resource by health professionals. In an interesting irony, the commitment of women to childbirth reform organisations often 'undercut the traditional family message' (143), as the time and energy involved was considerable. *Our Bodies, Our Babies* also examines how the 'self-confidence' gained through organisational activities often crossed over into a greater sense of awareness of women's power in other areas of life (149).

There is also attention to the varied approaches adopted by different groups within the childbirth reform movement. The NMAA adopted a conservative line of engagement with 'the System', laid out in its 'Code of Ethics' which encouraged polite and non-confrontational tactics with unsympathetic medical professionals. This reflected differences in how groups drew on maternal expertise but also, as Reiger cogently points out, was influenced by the significantly lesser challenge posed to the medical hierarchy through the search for breastfeeding reforms. Change in the delivery of childbirth services, by contrast, put groups such as Childbirth Education Australia (CEA) in direct conflict with a medical establishment that was not keen to concede power or knowledge to lay people. The conflicts within the movements themselves around professionalisation: training for childbirth education, midwifery involvement in such organisations, the emergence of professional lactation consultants and the roots of such movements in the notion of 'mother-to-mother' grassroots support are examined. Location and personality are explored as key factors in how such conflicts emerged, were managed and resolved or led to the formation of new groups. As Reiger indicates, the notion that 'the personal is political' has strong resonance in the field of childbirth experience, and also has significant implications for how emancipatory politics for women are experienced in the local context. Hierarchies and personality conflicts, as well as issues of class and cultural specificity within the childbirth reform groups, form part of the background for the public activities and achievements of such organisations.

The negotiation by these organisations of the more individualised consumer models for accessing care and achieving change also attracts sustained attention. The progression from a movement for reform throughout the 1970s and 1980s in the Australian landscape toward a stronger concentration on the achievement by individual women of a desired birth experience is examined. Reiger argues that the significant changes that have occurred in the delivery of childbirth services need to be considered alongside increasing intervention rates and the movements of governments towards rationalising the delivery of maternity care. Such interactions form a continued ground for attention and activism (286). The work of 'reconceptualising women's rights as sexually specific citizens', in Reiger's view, remains an important goal in the achievement of public and political recognition of the social value of reproductive labour (288). *Our Bodies, Our Babies* offers a valuable record of the history of activism in the area of reproductive reform.

The childbirth reform movements sought change on the basis of maternal expertise and women's experience, but the first wave feminists, Magarey argues, did not seek 'maternal citizenship' (172). Such differences in approach demonstrate the breadth and diversity of feminist concerns and activism in Australian political and social history. These texts, which both deal with grassroots movements for reform, operating at different times with widely divergent goals and strategies, add significantly to an appreciation of this breadth and diversity.

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- Magarey has been exploring these links for some time. See, for example, 'The Feminist History Group Goes to the Berks', *Hecate* 19.1 (1993): 36-57.

BOOZE, BABES, AND BALLS

Making Sense of Men's Magazines. By Peter Jackson, Nick Stevenson, and Kate Brooks. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.

Reviewed by Joanna L. Di Mattia

British style magazines in the 1980s, caught up in that decade's consumer ethos, gave birth to the 'new man' – that softer, more caring, more style-conscious *and* self-conscious man, who smiled seductively to male and female readers alike from the covers of such style bibles as *Esquire* and *GQ*. Aimed at single men-about-town with the disposable incomes necessary for intensive consumption (the 'new man' dressed for success), these magazines catered to and created a new consumer market that has continued to grow – *the men's lifestyle magazine* – and to rival its female counterparts.



In the 1990s, as part of a backlash toward these images and the wider cultural idealisation of the 'soft' man and the feminising of male culture, a new generation of men's lifestyle magazines emerged, commodifying the lifestyle of the 'new lad' – that infantile, unpretentious and loutish bad boy of British masculinity, epitomised by pop band Oasis, by football hooligans, and by men tired of feeling guilt for their more primal urges. Magazines like *Loaded*, *FHM* and *Maxim*, considered no better than 'soft-porn' by their detractors, and an honest and 'natural' manly pleasure by their regular customers, indicate both the re-visioning of male gender roles typical of many popular culture products of recent years, and a disturbing return to comfort in traditionally 'macho' pursuits, best explained here as drinking to excess, sexually objectifying women, and competitive sports.

Making Sense of Men's Magazines provides a substantial, although problematic analysis of the impact of the rise in popularity of men's lifestyle magazines in the 1990s. The study is contextualised within a growing anxiety about the shifts in the meaning of contemporary models of masculinity, and asks what the recent dramatic growth of the men's magazine market signifies in terms of men's changing identities and gender relations. The text combines a sociological perspective – drawing material and conclusions from a number of interviews conducted with male focus group participants of various ethnicities, generations, and sexualities, and also one all-female group – with a cultural analysis of the tools that men employ to 'make sense' of the images and narratives of masculinity offered by these magazines.

These magazines need to be described to those unaware of their content and concerns. The men's lifestyle magazines of the 1990s address a heterosexual readership and reinvent white male heterosexuality, celebrating it without critiquing it. They feature a sense of humour that makes use of sexism, racism, and homophobia to reinforce hegemonic models of masculinity. The magazines are blatantly politically incorrect and feature endless pictures of semi-naked women, as well as sex tips and advice that position men as sexual predators and women as sexual objects to be mastered, and paeans to drunkenness and vulgarity. By way of example, Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks explain that the most downmarket of the magazines, *Loaded*, embraces 'an idealistic, nostalgic notion of the good old days of white, working-class (male) Britishness' (37).

Locating themselves in the field of previous research on masculinity and consumption – namely, Frank Mort's *Cultures of Consumption* (1996), Sean Nixon's *Hard Looks* (1996), and Tim Edwards' *Men in the Mirror* (1997) – the authors of this work differentiate *Making Sense* through its exclusive focus on the emergence in the 1990s of more 'laddish' forms of masculinity and their associated commercial

cultures. Rightly noting that work on men's magazines lacks the scope and depth of feminist work on women's magazines, the authors explain that:

As with previous feminist research on women's magazines, there is also a characteristic emphasis on visual and textual representations of masculinity rather than an empirical engagement with different readings of these changing representations. (12)

Interestingly, for a study of visual representations, not one visual/photographic example is included within the text.

A study like this does, however, significantly open up a space for articulating the relationship between masculinity and consumer culture, and the relatively new concept of men as consumers. Historically, as feminism has shown, consumers were constructed as female – men as society's active producers, women its passive consumers. Of course, this led to the notion of mass culture as a debased and worthless (feminine) pursuit. In *The Sex of Things*, Victoria de Grazia explains that 'feminist thinkers have recognized the importance of consumption to the question of what processes transform a female into a woman' (7). Similarly, Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks acknowledge the potential liberation from hegemonic masculine roles and identities contained within the pages of 'lad' mags like *Loaded*, and the ways in which the consumption of these images and narratives may transform a male into a man. Men's lifestyle magazines are a unique phenomenon, self-consciously targeting men, as Tim Edwards has noted, 'as consumers of magazines designed to interest men if not necessarily to be about men' (*Men in the Mirror* 72).

The authors conceptualise masculinity 'as a discursive construction that assumes different forms in different places and at different times' (12). That is, masculinity like femininity shifts its meanings and forms in response to wider social and cultural changes. Masculinity is a site that is always contested and multiple, and today, it would seem, always fuelled by anxiety. Like the work of Judith Butler, this study also understands gender as both a performative and socially policed repeated act.

Making Sense is divided into four key sections. The study works best when it addresses the responses of the focus groups participants to the content of the magazines themselves and how they relate this content to their lives. The authors interpret the interview material through the idea of 'men's talk'. This 'men's talk' – 'the more mundane level of magazine consumption' (111) – centres on the discourses (*how* they discuss them) and the dispositions (from *where* they draw their meaning) that men use to 'make sense' of the magazines. As is explained in the introduction:

Put simply, we aim to understand the range of discourses on which different individuals and groups of men draw in making sense of the magazines ¼ and the different kinds of investments that they have in these discourses, embracing them or rejecting them for example. (13-14)

The authors conclude that the men surveyed (of which only a small percentage were readers of these magazines) do not take the content of the magazines seriously, and in fact attach the label of 'sad loser' to those that do. The idea of an 'intended reading' of the magazines is rejected in favour of the reader as the primary maker of the text's meaning, 'making sense' of it from the particular social structures at his disposal and the cultural positions he occupies. The authors call this process of production and

consumption the 'circuit of magazine culture' (4). Further, their interviews show that there is no ideological intent attached to the process of reading men's lifestyle magazines, indicated by the fact that most men only 'flick' through the pages (suggesting to this reader that the images of scantily-clad women dominates the 'reading' experience and the pleasure found in it).

Certain ideas that structure the propositions throughout, however, contain some difficulties from a feminist point-of-view, and warrant further attention here. *Making Sense* contends, quite insecurely, that these magazines function to diffuse gender anxiety and consequently provide men with 'constructed certitude' about their manhood (a concept they borrow from Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society*, 1992). Here, the authors argue 'that the magazines provide men with a kind of conceptual map for navigating safely through their contemporary gender anxieties, whether in relation to their health, their careers, their sexual relationships or their place in 'consumer culture' more generally' (14). Further:

While, in some readings, the magazines may be linked to the defensive persistence of heterosexual norms, they can also be read more ambivalently as embodying a number of fantasies about masculine behaviour and performance that continue to have a deep cultural purchase. For many of our focus groups participants, we have argued, the magazines offer a form of constructed certitude, providing a sense of reassurance amid all of men's contemporary uncertainties and anxieties. (146)

Yes, ambivalence opens up the possibility of new and potentially revised models of masculinity. Yes, ambivalent representations highlight the nature of gender as a greatly contested space. It is my opinion that these two ideas – constructed certitude and ambivalent reading – are in fact at odds within this work. A comfort zone from anxiety is found in fantasies about traditional masculine pursuits, male bonding, and sexually objectifying women; the so-called ambivalent images of men do not offer multiple possibilities but *very specific ideas and guidelines* about male behaviour and particularly heterosexual relations. Is the problem the 'type' of certain male self this ambivalence affords? Further, I cannot agree with the idea put forward by the authors that these magazines, by virtue of their ambiguous constructions, 'signify the *potential* for new forms of masculinity to emerge even as the magazines are simultaneously reinscribing older and more repressive forms of masculinity' (23). This study must be praised for embracing more open and fluid definitions of masculinity; its uncritical engagement with the particular tropes of masculinity celebrated and promoted in these magazines is, however, more difficult to reconcile.

Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks offer an uncritical stance toward masculinity's confrontational relationship with femininity and women in these magazines. They reject the moralistic tone of 'outrage' and 'blanket condemnation' that they associate with feminism. A barrier is erected by the excessively ironic tone that many of these magazines make use of, making a feminist, political analysis a difficult one. This irony, they conclude, ultimately protects the magazines from a political reading. The authors argue that 'the ironic content of the magazines allows men to experience many of the powerful fantasies that are traditionally associated with masculinity' and that 'to offer a political reading of the magazines could be perceived as a form of symbolic violence, seeking to silence some of the more informal pleasures of the text' (8, 38). To offer a political critique, therefore, is to 'miss the point' and not get the joke. Feminism, they warn, may again wear the charge of being humourless if it were to engage in a political critique of these magazines; they seem concerned that any critique of the masculine models in these magazines will serve to stabilise them in actuality, when nothing could be further from likelihood.

Unpacking masculinity exposes its contradictions, displaces its hegemony – engaging with the implications of these particular models of masculinity and femininity (laddish men and sexualised women) resonates significantly in the struggle to reconstruct gender relations as a whole.

The authors of this work 'apologise' for the lack of feminist perspective - and taking into account the predominantly heterosexist subject matter of most of the magazines discussed, this apology is necessary. It seems curious to this reviewer that a sociological study of men's lifestyle magazines would choose not to incorporate such a critical stance. These magazines are a cultural product that relies on the repetition of devalued and degrading models of femininity. If male anxiety *is* diffused at all in these magazines, it is not through the models of masculinity on offer, but in the way they return the female body to a passive, silent, sexualised space to be filled and controlled. The magazines attempt to resolve male anxieties by diffusing them all over the naked female body. Masculinity is reasserted at the expense of feminism and gender equality. Further, *Making Sense* repeatedly asserts that a backlash against feminism begun in many popular cultural products in the 1980s plays no part in the production and consumption of these magazines. While they concede that 'new lad' culture is based upon a fear of the feminine (86), the authors argue that the sociological context of these magazines is more complex than backlash discourse implies:

In sociological terms the magazines can be made sense of by identifying the social and cultural contradictions that they are trying to handle, caught between an awareness that old-style patriarchal relations are crumbling and the desire to reinscribe power relations between different genders and sexualities. (79)

But these social and cultural contradictions come from a specific source, and the upheavals to the male role are an effect of feminism's challenges to the social order and the private realm of gender relations. If men are feeling anxious about who they are and what they should be doing and consuming, they are anxious in part because of the constant rewriting of the gender order feminism generates. And, therefore, it would seem possible that the macho, hyper-masculine scripts permeating these magazines are part of a backlash that seeks to reinvigorate less ineffective and problematic (from the male viewpoint) ways of being a man.

These men's lifestyle magazines must receive further attention, not only in terms of how they damage feminist struggles for equality but, importantly, for the ways in which this representational dynamic returns masculinity and its own potential revolution to pre-feminist days. *Making Sense of Men's Magazines* is aware of these issues, but places them on the periphery of its analysis, and is diminished by this absence.

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ARTICULATING ALTERNATIVE SPIRITUALITIES

Rewriting God: Spirituality in Contemporary Australian Women's Fiction (Cross/Cultures 45). By Elaine Lindsay. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.

Reviewed by Anne Elvey

Elaine Lindsay's study of spirituality in the writings of Thea Astley, Elizabeth Jolley and Barbara Hanrahan, is set in two Australian contexts: one theological and 'malestream'; the other secular and feminist. Relying on Australian literature by male authors such as Patrick White and sometimes also drawing on Australian Indigenous spiritualities, the white 'malestream' theological context that Lindsay describes has sought to develop a distinctively Australian desert spirituality, thereby neglecting the potential contribution of writings by Australian women to an articulation of an alternative spirituality. For its own reasons the secular feminist context has also largely ignored the spiritual dimension of writings by Australian women such as Astley, Jolley and Hanrahan. More surprisingly perhaps, Australian feminist theologians have also bypassed fiction by Australian women, referring instead to North American writers such as Alice Walker to express their own spiritualities. It was her recognition of this last point, that provided the impetus for Lindsay's book. *Rewriting God* sets out to explore the ways in which the writings of Astley, Jolley and Hanrahan might contribute to an articulation of alternative Australian spiritualities.

The spirituality with which *Rewriting God* is in dialogue is principally Christian. Lindsay opens her study with a discussion of a paradigm of Australian spirituality she identifies as 'malestream' being developed by Christian authors such as Eugene Stockton and Tony Kelly. Lindsay's approach to the articulations of this 'malestream' paradigm is generous. Nevertheless, she highlights the negativity of much of this writing especially with regard to 'the image of man (the word is used intentionally) against the emptiness and the elemental and uncompromising power of the land' (10). She is rightly critical of appropriations of Indigenous spiritualities and the conscription of Aboriginal Australians as agents of white redemption. The overt sexism of some of these 'malestream' writings is brought out by judicious use of quotation that allows the texts to speak for themselves. Occasionally, however, I found this problematic; allowing the more offensive quotations to stand felt like an endorsement of these voices. But in the wider context of the book this was clearly not the case.

Setting the scene for her reading of Astley, Jolley, and Hanrahan, Lindsay offers an outline of Australian women's spirituality. Although not stated in the chapter title, Lindsay makes clear that the reference is to non-Indigenous Australian women whose spirituality is formed within, in relation to, or in tension with Christianity. She writes:

It is a fundamental point of my argument ... that many women and men experience Christianity differently, and that this is in large part due to the different ways women and men have been treated by mainstream churches and the lessons they have imbibed about their respective genders from church teaching: to put it baldly, men have been empowered by the church and women have been reminded of their subservience. (47)

Drawing from a number of existing collections by Australian feminist scholars of religion and theology, Lindsay maps this difference. 'Women,' she writes, 'are not interested in claiming Australia for Christ or in reading God into landmarks and heroes' (57). Rather, she argues, women are 'concerned with the

nature of God as revealed in the behaviour of people towards each other, and with the personal articulation of the experience of God' (57). She claims that white Australian women are less prone to appropriating Indigenous spiritualities than are their 'malestream' counterparts. Lindsay's comment, however, concerning the way in which non-Indigenous church women have failed to include Indigenous women in ways that are culturally appropriate deserves more than a footnote (87 n.134), although she does make clear the potential openness of the particular women's spiritualities she is sketching to the spiritual and cultural practices of other women, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

In each of the three chapters on the work of Astley, Jolley and Hanrahan, Lindsay follows a similar pattern. She offers a brief biography of the author, paying particular attention to the influence of Christianity in their life. She then describes aspects of spirituality in the author's work, focusing on the author's representation of interrelationships between the divine, nature and humankind. She looks, too, at the ways in which her findings compare with Christian understandings, as well as the Australian 'malestream' and women's spiritualities described at the start of the book. Finally Lindsay surveys the critical and scholarly reception of these authors and finds that, in the case of Astley and Jolley in particular, the spiritual dimensions of these works have received little attention.

Lindsay writes of Astley's work as displaying 'a fierce humour, verging on prophetic anger' (p. 140). This 'prophetic' voice highlights the value of compassion for humans founded in a divine loving kindness. Human kindness or the lack thereof is reflected in the relationship between nature and Astley's characters. The land has agency; the quality of relationship to the land reflects the quality of inter-human relationships. But neither formal Christianity nor the land itself are agents of salvation, nor is the 'malestream' dream of the desert. According to Lindsay, 'the only effective way Astley offers of assuaging the burden of being human is recognition that there exists a source of divine goodness whose continuing presence can be intimated from the natural world and who calls people into loving community with each other' (134).

For Jolley, music, books and nature are 'agents of transformation' (197-8). Lindsay suggests that while Jolley, in discussing her writing, 'asserts the primacy of love' (180) and its capacity to assuage suffering, her fiction portrays an ambiguity with respect to love. 'Love is not a pure and abstract quality which will bring about the salvation of the world' (175). Significant is Jolley's sensitivity to the complexities of human lives and her consequent reticence about passing judgement on her characters. 'Divine responsibility ... is not required of humans' (176). While institutional Christianity 'may have little sway over Australians, Jolley's books do suggest that the Bible has a profound cultural significance for believers and unbelievers alike...' (187). But Lindsay identifies in Jolley's works a reticence to name or characterise the divine, a reticence she associates with her Quaker heritage. Instead, her writings suggest 'a spiritual force within the land' which has 'distinctly female undertones' (193). Reading Jolley highlights for Lindsay the anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism of Christianity: 'In declining to image the divine as human, Jolley effectively removes humankind from its self-proclaimed position at the centre of the universe and reincorporates it (though some might say reductively) into the life-flow' (200).

Discussing Barbara Hanrahan's work, Lindsay emphasises the way in which Hanrahan characterises her art and her writing as a spiritual or religious quest. Lindsay looks at three strands of Hanrahan's writing, her autobiographical fiction such as *The Scent of Eucalyptus*, her gothic fictions, and her fictional biographies. Her reading of these is supported by her reading of Hanrahan's diaries. Hanrahan presents everyday life as fantastic; mythic; archetypal. While Christianity is characterised as largely impotent,

the domestic world and suburban gardens become sacred spaces. Her grandmother Iris becomes an Earth mother and sky goddess figure. Wise women/ witch characters appear in the 'virtual absence of salvatory male figures' (244). In the gothic fiction, 'evil is portrayed as an ongoing elemental force which exists independently of humans, although it can manifest itself through them' (248). Threading Hanrahan's work is an uneasiness with the body and a sense of the divided self. Lindsay reads her writing as a working out of this sense of division within the self. In the biographical fictions, 'healing of the self comes not through self-study, but through ministering to others' (256). Interestingly, Hanrahan's 'impatience with the body ... does not extend to the rest of physical creation' (245). Hanrahan displays contemplative delight in detail and a ritualistic style of narration which, for Lindsay, illuminate the everyday.

Rewriting God begins with a question concerning the way in which fiction by Australian women 'might be more relevant to Australian theologians and spiritual writers than imported material' (ix). To some extent this question sets the parameters and language of the inquiry. Occasionally I found the language problematic and certain related questions were unasked. Although Lindsay noted explicitly, for example, that her work toward an Australian spirituality was white and in conversation with Christian traditions, I felt that this nuance was often elided in the course of the study. Recent work by Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Anne Pattel-Gray has challenged white Australian feminists to interrogate the whiteness of their own work. Lindsay's book might have been strengthened by setting the quest for an Australian spirituality more explicitly in the context of Aboriginal displacement and dispossession in Australia. While aspects of this emerged in her critiques of 'malestream' desert spiritualities and in her readings of Astley in particular, I wonder if any discussion of spirituality in Australia can adequately begin outside this context. How does an acknowledgement of the Aboriginal displacement which underscores the placement of any non-Aboriginal spirituality as 'Australian' inform our constructions of an 'Australian' spirituality that neither ignores nor appropriates the spiritualities and claims of Aboriginal peoples? Lindsay's open-ended conclusion leaves room for future explorations of such questions.

There were other occasional uses of language which I found troublesome. In her reading of Astley, Lindsay refers to a God 'who sends a natural disaster as a dreadful warning, who destroys people as punishment, and who saves others as proof of his goodness' as a 'God from the Hebrew Bible, not the New Testament' (107). The juxtaposition of Hebrew Bible and New Testament with the former the site of a judging capricious God (see also 135) repeats a problematic Christian stereotype. The Hebrew Bible displays many images of the divine; there is a judging God, but there is also divine loving-kindness and wisdom. Further, the so-called 'New' Testament also has its characterisations of divine judgement. *Both* Jewish and Christian scriptures, moreover, in their continuity and difference, are marked by the androcentrism and anthropocentrism of the contexts in which they arose.

This androcentric heritage of Christianity left me feeling uncomfortable with Lindsay's use of 'God'. She makes an explicit choice to broaden the use of the term 'religious' so that, to some extent, the categories 'religious' and 'spiritual' are interchangeable. The notion of 'rewriting God' has a similar resonance; the term 'God' is retained in order to be re-imagined. But even as they are called into question, the masculine resonances of the term 'God' remain; this becomes explicit when Lindsay without qualification uses 'his' with reference to God (140). I could not be sure whether in the context her use of the masculine pronoun was a slippage or intentional. Second, while Lindsay is critical of Veronica Brady's reading of God into Jolley's work, the sections on 'God' in her readings of Astley and Jolley were the least convincing given the lack of interest these writers, particularly Jolley, show in

naming 'God' in their writings. The treatment of this aspect with respect to Hanrahan's work was done differently and I think more successfully. Third, I felt that although Lindsay referred to occasions on which goddesses figured in the works this aspect of the divine could have been more fully explored. What worked particularly well, however, were Lindsay's readings of the authors' understandings of the spiritual power of nature, of human inter-relationships with nature, and of the ethics their fictions suggest in relation to human suffering.

A particular strength of this study is Lindsay's reading of individual texts in the context of an author's body of work. Weaving together biographical contexts and close readings with a feminist theological sensitivity, Lindsay makes a strong case for reading Astley, Jolley and Hanrahan as spiritual writers. She challenges Christians seeking to articulate an Australian spirituality to read Australian women's fiction as sources for stories counter to the 'malestream' fixation with desert and struggle. The value for me of Lindsay's study is that it prompted me to return to the writings of Thea Astley, Elizabeth Jolley, and Barbara Hanrahan with a new perspective, not so much to see them as resources or sources for articulating an Australian spirituality, as to read them with an eye to the workings of compassion, the challenge and celebration of the everyday, and the land as context, mirror, and agent in relation to human lives.

See Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (University of Queensland Press, 2000, reviewed last issue) and Anne Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood: Racism in Australia* (Scholars Press, 1998).

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MYTHIC CHANCE

Neap Tide. By Dorothy Hewett. Melbourne: Penguin, 1999. *A Baker's Dozen*. By Dorothy Hewett. Melbourne: Penguin, 2001.
Reviewed By Barbara Garlick

The title of this review is taken from a Carlos Fuentes passage that Dorothy Hewett uses in her short story 'Homeland', written in 1991 for George Papaellinas's collection *Heartland*, and now republished in her first collection of short stories, *A Baker's Dozen*. The quotation is 'You above all, you of the New World, you do have something more than an epic fatality, you do have a mythic chance.' Re-reading *Neap Tide* side by side with these stories, I was struck by how much Hewett speaks not just for self (and she is so often spoken of as a supremely autobiographical writer) but for a whole country of the New World which is both geographical and imaginative, a country of generations of writers who in various ways have been grasping for that mythic chance, the chance of creating a new mythos which is distinctively of that New World. I am not talking here of a consciously manipulated Australian idiom but of a new way of assimilating the massive and often intimidating baggage of Western cultural reference that is the legacy of colonialism into a voice that is not afraid to range joyously over that culture and incorporate it into a fresh vision.



Hewett's writing could have emerged only from that rich past. It is erudite, elegantly literary, but also playful in the way that she moves easily from one hemisphere to the other: the spotted gums, for instance, in the enchanted forest landscape of southern New South Wales smoothly replace the primeval forest which is the location of Tess's seduction, and the dunes replace the Egdon Heath of Eustacia Vye's restless wandering. This fluid playing with reference, however, has an ironic edge which characterizes that fresh vision. Jessica is not seduced under the spotted gums, and the letter which clears up a mystery at the heart of *Neap Tide* falls out from the leaves of an old twenties popular paperback, 'like a scene from a Thomas Hardy novel.'

It is this playfulness which needs to be taken into account when reading *Neap Tide*. There are plenty of clues which can point towards a Gothic reading, both specific ('it's like some incredible Gothic tale') and allusive (the various isolated houses, each with its own secret; the living dead or the dead living; secrecy; fluid identities; malevolent forces). In each case, however, the novel defies such easy categorizing. This is summed up towards the end as Jessica rides out of town and is waylaid by the old Aboriginal woman with the glass eye who jumps out at the car to confer a benediction on the departing Jessica. This quasi-Chorus or Tiresias character ultimately though serves no symbolic function. She is merely a con woman who takes out her glass eye to get money from the tourists, and appears in the rear vision mirror cackling happily as she waves her glass eye around so that 'its many facets shimmered in the light.' Allowing the Gothic to overwhelm the reading of this novel deflects attention from the various ways it transcends genre labelling. Romantic assumptions are continually deflated and nothing turns out to be quite what it appears. As Nicole Moore pointed out in her *overland* review when the novel first appeared, Jessica's resistance to romantic poetry (and to the male poets who people the novel) takes the form of an absorption in those popular paperbacks which she finds in the rented house on the cliff and the possibility of a new academic study of popular reading. Another authorial joke?

One might think so if you go by the quotation on the back of the Penguin edition from Brenda Walker who seems to have been completely taken in by the game (whether it's from a full review or is just a pre-publication puff I'm not sure): 'A spectacular novel of romance from the dangerous edges of the land and the sea.' But this novel is by no means an upmarket Mills and Boon.

Games and playful ironies aside, *Neap Tide* has a serious purpose in its subversion of the clichés associated with the romantic artist figure, 'The artist as hell-raiser and romantic rebel. He'd had no background, you see, no real place or family. It was as if he'd invented himself from nothing, a phenomenon sprung fully formed from the head of Zeus.' The settlement of Zane has all the romantic isolation the artist might desire for creation, but it is a place of false hopes, of rape and murder, of death and desertion, and, most importantly, of wrong readings where the drowned woman is really only 'a poor bloody seal.' The only piece of writing to emerge from Zane is by the ex-con Lenny, *The Zane Journal*, meant to be a book of 'wise thoughts about the environment' but which is 'nothing but chatter' according to its author. Lenny is still, however, the town's archivist, keeper of secrets and honey man, and the *Journal* is the interpolated secondary text filling in vital details which undermine the romantic isolation of Zane, telling the town's stories and presenting a view of a mundane world which is sad, ordinary, and full of gossip and mistakes.

Hewett's understanding of the need to find that necessary wellspring for the writer, the 'real place,' takes many forms. She can be inspired by another writer's 'real place' as much as by the landscapes of her own past and imagination. It is the 'small clean enclosed space of filtered light,' the dreamspace of the self which is the central image of the autobiography and which reappears in 'The Darkling Sisters'; and it is the Nietzschean abyss which she mentions in 'Homeland.' Place is at the heart of all the thirteen stories of *A Baker's Dozen*, written and sometimes rewritten over a period of forty years. They explore the landscape of experience and imagination, recording as they do so a significant and turbulent period in Australian history, the second half of the twentieth century. There are bush stories and city stories, political stories and tales of solitary individuals.

In her introduction Hewett asserts that there is 'an unmistakable uniformity of style, thought and feeling which helps to bind these tales together into a roughly coherent whole.' Contributing to that uniformity is the continuing sense of writerly joy in a hybrid cultural heritage in which echoes both enrich and disconcert the reader. Reading 'Joe Anchor's Rock,' for instance, I am haunted by the presence of Joyce's 'The Dead,' heat for snow, Jarrabin for Galway (and is it only coincidence that Rachel is exiled from her homeland of Mangamaunu where Henry Lawson spent so many unhappy months?). Dislocation is actual and psychological for both character and reader.

The sexual ironies of *Neap Tide* are anticipated in 'On the Terrace' with its deliberate undercutting of the Lawrentian mating game: Tim who 'wanted the symbol of the earth-mother, without the brutal reality,' and who uses terms like 'poetess' and 'Jewess,' is ultimately 'a little man, looking somehow diminished in the late afternoon sunlight, and she was free and sad and sorry for him, with enough insight to wonder how much of it was sour grapes.' For a while there we all wanted to wear coloured stockings like Gudrun, because it seemed that Lawrence almost had it right about women - until Kate Millett told us otherwise. But here's Hewett writing ten years before Millett, mimicking Lawrence in her character's 'strident maleness' and wryly wondering at the end if it's all just sour grapes, seeing through the Lawrentian clichés as she will do later in *Neap Tide* when Lenny allows his fox to escape at the end of his *Journal*.

So many stories, so many years, so much lived life. In her latest collection of poetry, *Halfway up the Mountain*,* Hewett expresses almost an obsession with her place in a long, long tradition of poetry making. These are poems of old age in which the infirm body bears no relation to the vigour and continuing richness of the imagination, 'I never ran so fast as I do now' ('The Runner'), recalling Yeats and his likening of the body in old age to a tin can tied to a dog's tail, whereas 'never had I eye and ear more fantastical' than now, as he says in 'The Tower.' John Kinsella writes of these poems in his introduction as an archaeological dig: of geographies, relationships, language, and personae. It is through the medium of the poem that Hewett has recaptured that archaeologically 'perfect memory' of 'Signposts', in a language that is as taut and dazzling as the wheel of stars that encompasses and marks all childhood memory. And beneath that wheel of stars are the places, people and a literary heritage which she has recorded in her geography of place and time in this New World, grasping Fuentes's mythic chance in a language which shows no sign of diminishing in its intensity and power.

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- Reviewed by Marilla North in our last issue.

POST-PORN-MODERNISM IN THE NOUGHTIES

Hardcore from the Heart. The Pleasures, Profits and Politics of Sex in Performance: Annie Sprinkle SOLO. Edited with commentaries by Gabrielle Cody. London and New York: Continuum Academic, 2001.

Whaddya Mean You're Allergic to Rubber? By Rachel Berger. Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 2001.
Reviewed by Evelyn Hartogh

Hardcore from the Heart is a selection of post-porn-modernist Annie Sprinkle's performance scripts and articles, transcripts of conversations about Annie Sprinkle by renowned performance artists such as Veronica Vera and Linda Montano, and essays by Gabrielle Cody. The book is kissed by academic and performative credibility with a forward by Rebecca Schneider, author of the feminist performance artist's bible, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (Routledge 1997).



Hardcore is an excellent collection mainly due to the wide diversity of forms (scripts, articles, essays, conversations) and viewpoints in relation to Annie. The most exciting of these was the transcript of 'Annie's Dessert with Mae Tyme, an Anti Porn Feminist.' It is a most amicable and informative discussion and the women acknowledge this at the end, Annie confesses her longtime but thwarted desire to have such a conversation: 'Everyone I've ever met who is anti-porn would never sit down at a table with me', while Mae admits to never desiring such a conversation but concedes: 'I'm glad to be having it with you'. Mae winds up the discussion by saying:

A conversation like this is possible when each of us has freedom of expression and no-one is required to change. I don't expect you to become anti-porn, and you don't expect me to become pro-porn.

Annie Sprinkle came across to me as a thoroughly warm, compassionate and honest woman. She is in many ways the ultimate 'Hooker with a Heart of Gold', while at the same time possessing the kind of passion for contemplation that makes her a true philosopher. Philosophy is after all the love (philos) of wisdom (sophia), and Annie is a figure who has sought knowledge, experience, debate and discovery all her life.

Sprinkle is most famous for her performance of displaying her cervix to audiences. This inside/out display of the ultimate hidden reaches of woman acts as a physical manifestation of the philosophies of Cixous and Irigaray. Annie's credibility in resituating porn in art, and celebrating female sexuality, lies in her 'herstory' of being a sex worker and porn star. She (literally) knows the industry inside and out and, although her work seeks to disrupt sexual repression and negative attitudes towards sex, she is not above critiquing her past. In an open letter to a New York performance space Annie says: 'I was sometimes quite naive, very immature, and in denial about a lot of things.... How precious to have a place which is so sex positive that we can be "negative." Please continue to maintain a good balance.' I wonder if it can really be said that Annie made a 'transition' from prostitution and pornography to performance art and academia (she's currently completing her PhD). Wasn't she always a performance artist? And does she still remain a prostitute? Jill Dolan in her 1989 article 'Desire Cloaked in a

Trenchcoat' (*Acting Out: Feminist Performances*, University of Michigan Press, 1993), suggests that the 'positions of female performer and female spectator are collapsed into one; they become prostitutes who buy and sell their own image in a male-generated visual economy.'

It is after all the 'oldest profession' and in the last decade many books discussing the politics of sex work have invariably brought up the image of the ancient temple prostitute. While the existence of a golden age of matriarchy is debatable, the image is strong enough regardless to still affect this age. The by-gone era of the sacred prostitute is also described as a time where female sexuality was worshipped and every woman was treated like a goddess. Vestiges of the goddess-whore remain in the sophisticated Geisha, legends of Concubines with political influence, the high-class Ancient Athenian hetaerae, and more recently in the untouchable (yet deeply intimate) worship of celebrity through mass media.

Gabrielle Cody points out that pornography as a separate category did not appear until the nineteenth century, 'when lawmakers throughout Europe ostensibly sought to protect a predominantly white, middle-class female population from sexually explicit material and - by extension - knowledge of their own sexuality'. Suppression of pornography and the coding of it as a 'dirty' and 'unladylike' commodity does not diminish its audience, which is primarily men. Male sexuality is thus in many ways hidden from view, and it is male desire which is hidden, in the beats to which married men sneak off, in the darkened XXXX movie theatres, in the secret visits to prostitutes, in the *Playboys* hidden in the shed. Is this a masculine embarrassment or a fear of sexuality?

Although men are predominantly the consumers of porn, and the customers of sex workers, it has been the women on display, or for rent, who have borne the brunt of the coding of 'dirty' and 'unladylike'. Women's expression of their sexuality has mainly been in response to male desire, yet in recent decades feminists have consistently challenged this. Annie Sprinkle is at the forefront of the redefinition of female sexuality.

There is a war going on in people's bedrooms, people are ignorant, fearful and confused about sex, unsatisfied, lying to their spouses, there is rape, abuse, unwanted pregnancy, too much sexually transmitted disease ... we must have better sex education. (Annie Sprinkle's 'Peace in Bed')

What better way to educate people about safe sex, and about the lives of HIV positive people, than to do it with humour. Rachel Berger's first novel *Whaddya Mean You're Allergic to Rubber?* zooms from Leather Bars to formal political dinners, to the AIDS Council, and to well-known cafes and bars in Melbourne. Berger is one of Australia's most successful stand up comedienne and, in the transition from stage to page, she worked on some innovative graphic design with her editor as 'a little treat for the reader', as she told *Queensland Pride*. Berger explained that in the situation of live performance 'I have my whole body and face to use.'

Berger's main character is Lola Finklestein, a feisty comedienne who, in the tradition of Scooby Doo, accidentally falls into the role of detective. Lola's Scooby-gang is made up of Drag Queens, Leather Queens, HIV positive characters, AIDS Council workers, and public servants spilling the goods on corrupt politicians. Lola and her friends are trying to find out why Springfield Hospital, which predominantly treats HIV positive patients, is being closed down. The answer is an ugly combination

of economic rationalism and homophobia since, it emerges, the hospital building is being sold for an American private prison.

Berger avoided writing any physical descriptions of Lola and described her as a character that lives through her head. 'What was potent was what was coming out of her mouth ... Lola does not rely on her physicality at all and we have had two decades of women being objectified and even now they are still being objectified but it's a little more sophisticated.' The novel also works not only to promote the importance and ease of safe sex but to also dispel myths about the lived experiences of HIV positive people. 'All the positive characters in the book are not victims. Smoky Topaz is potent, and Christopher Pillar is potent, and Dierdre is potent. They are all really potent, none of them are victims because anybody that I know that is positive - it is about reasonable adjustment', Berger explained. Dierdre is a heterosexual woman who, while she was married, was informed by her doctor that she was both pregnant and HIV positive. 'The three characters in the book who are positive are not gay - I didn't want to buy into those stereotypes.... I'm hoping the mainstream audience will understand that it [safe sex, HIV and AIDS] is not just relevant to the gay community.'

Rachel Berger is primarily a comedian so, although this book is extremely topical and blatantly realistic in its critique of government policy and public opinion, it still is a very funny book. The characters are dynamic and believable, and the humour ranges from dry to banana-split-like slapstick. Lola is a bit of a haphazard creature but is extremely likeable - she is courageous and naive at the same time, which distances the character from the super-perfect protagonists of most detective fiction. This novel crosses many genres, not only Detective Fiction but also Comedy, Political Satire, Farce, Romance and Queer Fiction. My only criticism of it is that perhaps some of the dialogue is overly wordy and repetitive - but the reader always has the options of skimming over conversations that reiterate information already presented. On the whole, I'm very impressed with Berger's debut novel.

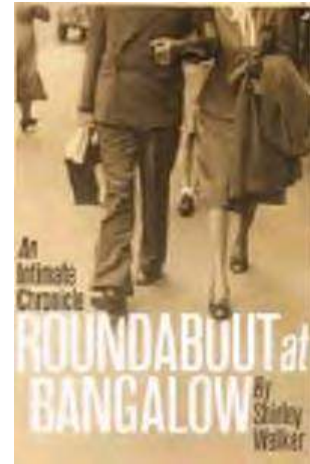
Evelyn Hartogh has a Masters in Women's Studies from Griffith University (1997) and recently completed and submitted her Masters in Creative Writing to the University of Queensland. She writes a fortnightly column for *Queensland Pride Magazine* entitled 'Evelyn Hartogh's Pop Cult Sheroes' which discusses historical and fictional representations of women.

LANDSCAPE AND MEMOIR

Roundabout at Bangalow: An Intimate Chronicle. By Shirley Walker,
St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001.

Reviewed by Marilla North

As Simon Schama has put it, it is 'our shaping perception' that 'makes the difference between raw matter and landscape' (*Memory and Landscape* Harper Collins, London, 1995, 10). The English savoured and swallowed the word 'landscape' from the cloth-trading Netherlanders in the late sixteenth century: Old High German 'landshaft' had by then become the Dutch 'landshap' which became the Elizabethan English 'landskip'. It was 'borrowed' as a technical term by painters, and thenceforth the English visual (and dramatic) imagination leaped from the pageant wagon's vertical constraints of Heaven and Hell to embrace the horizontal great outdoors.



But (perhaps nostalgic for the four sides of the dray) the Europeans' creative relationship with landscape demanded that 'landscapes' be given proper framing. French artist Claude of Lorraine's (1600-82) contribution (the ingenious Claude-glass, a portable mirror backed with dark foil) helped both the cultural tourist and the visual artist determine what exactly was 'picturesque', and ensured that a reflective light would be shed on the developing genre, which reached back to the realms of Myth.

Thus the 'landscapes' of Europe became the sum of Nature plus the transformations wrought by humans upon it. Each nation-culture's platform of myth, and the attendant realms of legend (plus their echoes and allusions in every story created thereafter) are all tied to its particular natural landscapes, and to features within them, as surely as the constellations in the skies are tied to the pantheon of Mount Olympus or the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

Ethnologists assert that the primary force of a culture's Myth governs the symbiotic interactions of its landscape with its history. Re-phrasing that: a landscape's history (and that of those who live within it) is governed by the nation-state/occupying tribe's mythology; or so ethnologists convincingly demonstrate. A Sacred Place remains forever so and invites appropriate historical record, even if this is of its violation.

Schama argues that the old Gods who fed the Judeo-Christian body of Myth have never gone away, and that the traditions of conceiving, inscribing and recreating landscape in the visual and imaginative arts are all built upon this rich deposit of mythologies, attendant ceremonies and obsessions. The nature cults of antiquity are alive and well in our perceiving minds today, Schama-shaman asserts.

But what of these relationships in a more recent settler culture. In a colonised landscape formerly long-possessed by an ancient and alien culture whose languages and myths the settlers tried to destroy. As here, in Australia. And further, how do we frame our metaphysical perceptions in the newly-settled landscape when that other linguistic and narrative decimation is but one factor in the impenetrability of the mythology of this other and one single ancient culture to those of us who are non-Indigenous and

living in Australia here-and-now (over two hundred years along the European colonising track).

Finding our own European-transplanted story in this adopted landscape of Terra Australis: finding our place, our antecedents, our perceptual way towards framing this landscape 'appropriately' (such as by sharing or borrowing from the Indigenes) is a double helix of possible mutual reconciliation yet to be unwound. If each begins the task, individually, perhaps then we can connect and help re-create a collective, national culture.

In *Roundabout at Bangalow*, Walker has begun deciphering her own story by commencing her reading of the many Australian landscapes whose history is symbiotically involved with her own personal and family myth-making. Like Judith Wright in *Half A Lifetime* (1999) - and that poet's life-narrative shares many landscapes in common with the teacher Shirley Walker's - she invokes the magic age of seven, the mystical number, as a milestone of the re-membered Self in siting her memoir:

I am seven. I live in a valley in the rainforest. Around us is the remnant of the Big Scrub which once covered the land from north of Murwillumbah to the Richmond River. Beneath the tangle of giant softwoods, cedar, rosewood and teak, the envy of the cabinet makers of the world, is a warm maze of fern and lawyer vine. The smell of cut timber permeates the air as the giant trees are felled and the logs hauled to the mill. The houses which line the single street of the village are for the most part built of raw timber, with tin roofs and tin fireplaces. Verandahs and tankstands are festooned with staghorns, elkhorns, haresfoot ferns and orchids from the scrub.

The valley with its two creeks, Terania and Tuntable, is encircled by the cleared flanks of the mountains, green with paspalum, studded with the stumps of the rainforest trees. Behind are high bluffs, and beyond them the serrated peaks of the Nightcap Range, and then Mount Warning. The great mountain, an extinct volcano, is seen only from the heights yet its presence is always felt, kingfisher blue, looming in the distance (3).

The settlers' acts of deforestation reverberate in Walker's sense-memory; she recalls the flora of the lost Arcadia decorating the raw domesticity built in the 'clearings'. Names evoke an ancient pre-settler past: 'Murwillumbah' means 'good camping ground'. This is the Bundjalung country written of by Ruby Langford Ginibi, and the backdrop, the mountain-scape, has witnessed the cruel past; generational repressed guilt is always within its 'presence' of 'kingfisher blue': under the always 'looming', aptly named Mount Warning.

Sixty-plus years later, Walker writes in the present tense of her seven-year-old landscape sensibility: a 'primal horizon', this place is the 'birth of (her) consciousness.' My own seven-year-old memory is also backgrounded (and foregrounded) with blue: seen through blurring tears (my surrogate grandfather had just died on the Snowy), the pea-like purple flowers of the psoralea swim against its short, soft needles of Brunswick green against the always clear blue sky of the coastal river basin of my steel-town suburban early childhood.

I envy Walker the rich complexity of her 'primal horizon': the varied topography and the majesty of the volcanic terrain; the privilege of growing up in sight of that awe-inspiring mountain; the magic of her memory of the guiding, guarding lighthouse beacon at Byron Bay; the poetry in her landmarks and sacred sites.

Location is important; all my North Coast places are spectacularly beautiful - the cradle, one would think, of tranquil thoughts and loving deeds. Unfortunately this doesn't always follow. My parents met at Christmas 1924 in the village of Billinudgel, a typical small stop on the North Coast railway branch line between Casino and Murwillumbah. The railway runs along the narrow coastal shelf between the mountains and the sea, and is the lifeline for the small communities strung like beads along it. The area is defined by the spectacular semicircle of mountains, ridges and escarpment which forms the volcanic shield of Mount Warning. This is a magical landscape even today, but in its primeval state, before Captain Cook ... it would have resembled a scene from Jurassic Park with its groves of bangalow palms, its impenetrable thickets of stinging tree and lawyer vine, and its under-layer of tree-fern and cunjevoi.

The European history of the area goes back to the times when the cedar logs were hauled by bullock teams ... sent spinning down the shoots to the narrow coastal shelf where other bullock teams hauled them out into the surf to be loaded onto schooners waiting in the bay. We are not told how many were crushed by a ricocheting log, or how many drowned in the surf in what seems to have been a desperate enterprise for both men and bullocks. At the time of my story the Big Scrub is still being felled to make way for pastures of paspalum and clover ... This is called *clearing*, as though it's a virtuous pursuit, a cleansing of riotous and uncontrolled nature...

If the apex of the volcanic shield is Mt Warning, the focal point is Cape Byron, the most easterly point of the Australian mainland. On it stands the lighthouse, solid, dazzling and pure, the eye of this world. The light at Byron Bay presides over my story. It can illuminate and warn, but is powerless to prevent the actions of any, let alone those with whom I'm concerned. A minor and fixed light shines steadfastly out to sea, visible only from certain dangerous shoals. The main light does a complete revolution, flashing intermittently from dusk to dawn. Its arc fingers the distant volcanic folds running down to the sea, the cliffs and waterfalls, the clusters of bangalow palms and the remnant patches of rainforest back to Goonengerry and the Whian Whian State Forest... Its arc takes in villages with historic names such as Eureka and Federal, and more evocative titles such as Jerusalem Creek, Emigrant Creek and Repentance Creek. Others like Tintenbar and Newrybar are derived from Aboriginal names, although the Aboriginal race is at this time banished from both the rainforest and the farms. Billinudgel itself was once the Aboriginal 'place of the king parrots' (36-7).

Walker's prose-painted landscapes evidence all that the ethnologists claim: they are heavy with Myth and with the European transplanted psychological responses to the primeval past of the rainforests, projecting onto them the ancestral preconceptions of beauty and fear of the northern hemisphere woods. The 'clearing' toil of the settlers is depicted as both dangerous and enterprising heroism. The stamp of conquest is carried in place names such as 'Eureka' and 'Federal' and 'Emigrant Creek'. Even 'Repentance Creek' was of course more likely named to reflect some messianic fundamentalism imported from the Old Country rather than the massacres, the poisoned water-holes, the lost languages and the vanished lore of the land.

Yet Tintenbar and Newrybar and Billynudge remain for their dispossessed surviving Indigenous progeny to return to and stand tall within and share the meanings of in recovering the readings of their landscapes: perhaps, hopefully, all within the fullness of healing time.

But all Edens must be lost, even unto small, white, settler-born girls. The Great Depression uprooted Walker's parents, who, with their two daughters in tow, became itinerants like the Aborigines before them and like many settlers of their generation, moving up and down the outback track of northern NSW and southern Queensland country towns, wherever the breadwinner could find tenuous employment.

The first move made by Walker's family to Wallangarra, 'takes us from the most lush and beautiful scenery in Australia to a barren little town of rickety weatherboard houses leaning in against the wind'.

Its dusty lanes, which double as stock routes, are lined with pepperina trees. This is a different Australia, the gaunt, pared-down Australia of a Drysdale painting. We explore the countryside at once, wandering far over the paddocks but finding only eroded gullies littered with rusty tins, clumps of blackberries, and the yellow mullock heaps left by disappointed tin-miners. In place of friendly cows there are stupid-eyed sheep. Nothing else moves on the dry ground but a few scavenging goats and a thousand rabbits. Monotonous gum trees are draped with mistletoe and the wide skies stretch to the horizon (67).

This is 'The Wasteland' down-under: by the mid-twentieth century the devastated western slopes and plains of east coast Australia were undeniable evidence of European depredation. Wrought by cloven hooves upon fragile topsoils, erosion was rapid and annihilating. The dislocated first generations of Europeans had sought only to exploit. The resulant landscapes' recent history would be formed by psychologically necessary pseudo-mythologies of a pre-existing, voracious desert, of 'hostile' lands, of martyred explorers who disappeared in the course of 'opening up' the continent. The criminals would become heroes, apotheosised: cattle duffers and bush-rangers would become martyred victims, and 'innocent' settlers murdered by 'savage' blacks would (conveniently) become the sacrificial Judeo-Christian scapegoats despatched to Azazel in the Wilderness, retrospectively providing atonement for the subsequent generations' prosperity.

But other landscapes were also carried, in colonial times, inside the hearts and minds of the immigrants, and memories of the northern hemisphere's formative-mythologies framed their gaze

under southern skies. And so the Great Inland Sea was the goal of explorers, seers and madmen. Since the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, through Roman Gaul and into Britannia, a lake (or a sea) of land-locked water was conceived as the Earth's eye through which the Underworld could view Creation; as such it was the repository of both divinity and power. When the Red Centre was found to be but rock and a handful of dust, the collective European gaze turned back to the coastal shores and sought the sun gods of sea-farers. Her heritage being a true microcosm of her settler culture, Shirley Walker found similar spiritual respite.

I hold my map of the Bay in my mind and cherish it. It's the map of memory and desire, its central point the lighthouse on the Cape, dazzling white and pure. Everything radiates from that centre. From dawn to sunrise the lighthouse advances steadily towards the sun and, over the aromatic islands of the Pacific - Fiji, Vanuatu, Tahiti - the sun dances to the meeting and embraces the tower on the Cape.

At night it is different; from dusk to dawn the light moves in its steady arc, blessing everything over which it passes. It sweeps out to sea over the Julian Rocks, over the beach with its two jetties, the old and the new, and between them the inshore wreck of the first Wollongbar, caught in a storm in the early twenties.... It passes over the windy little town behind its row of Norfolk Island Pines, and sweeps the heights of St Helena. As the light passes over the escarpments they dream of their past, of the bullock teams, the great cedar logs, the 'shoots' down to the plain and the waiting sailing-ships in the bay, and back before them the black tribes on the beach and in the rainforest (75).

Walker's motif of the all-embracing arc of the Byron Bay light provides her with a powerful personal icon, a focus for the religiosity with which a sentient being imbues a sacred place, thereby projecting onto it all that pre-lapsarian beneficence which offers the potential for security and guidance: a place to return Home.

But Walker weaves this life-story out of both her own and the peregrinations of several generations of progenitors that move in intersecting circles, across far wider tracts of northern New South Wales than the arc of the Byron light could ever reach.

At Grafton the Clarence River is three quarters of a mile wide, spanned by the double-decker road and rail bridge - the trains thunder through on the lower deck, shaking the foot-bridges on either side of it, and vehicles stream across the upper deck.... There is a persistent rumour, but a rumour only, that the body of a murdered child, a thirteen year old boy, has been disposed of in the freshly poured concrete of one of the bridge pylons. His disappearance is quite a mystery. It's said that he whistled 'Ramona' as he strolled away from a friend's house at dusk, slouching along with his hands in his pockets, never to be seen again. As time goes on more and more people are convinced that he is interred deep in the pylon, deeper than the rushing water, under hundreds of tons of wet and dark concrete. People

become obsessed with 'Ramona'; it reverberates around the district and refuses to go away. Everyone is humming it. The boy is probably far away, picking fruit in the Riverina or working on a fishing boat off Broome, but the rumour adds a thrill of horror when we walk over the footbridge and look down on the pylon in question, half expecting to see blood seeping out through its porous shell (84).

Here there is threat. The urban myth of the murdered child whose body has been 'disposed of' picks up on the older, underlying fear of settler parents of the child lost in the bush, and is symptomatic of the guilt and anxiety that is frontier history's residual impact: a legacy of repression and denial 'even unto the third generation'. I am reminded of nineteenth century colonial novelist Rosa Praed and her lifelong, haunting dream of a fantasised sharing of her father's eye-witness of the 1857 Hornet Bank massacre ... and of her later morphine use and her hair falling out. I wonder about Walker's mother's growing mental disequilibrium in Grafton in the late 1930s, and the roots of that dis-ease.

Women and children are objects of predatory male lust amid the rigid doctrines of reformist Protestantism in the parlours and the sitting rooms of the fob-bewatched, whale-bone-collared pillars of the community in their tidy houses set on Grafton's deceptively wide and open streets.

The street names - Prince Street, Victoria Street, Queen Street and Fitzroy Street - tell their own story of colonial reverence for the British establishment. There is an Anglican cathedral designed by Horbury Hunt and a Catholic church with a convent and boarding school which spread themselves along the river bank. The Presbyterian Church is a classical white building built on land acquired by John Dunmore Lang. It has the only spire in the city, and in October and November this pure white spire and the roofs of the higher buildings float in a purple haze, for the hundreds of Brazilian jacaranda trees first planted in the streets in the 1880s are in bloom. They float like a lavender mist above the avenues and streets, while the bitumen is inches deep in a purple carpet of jacaranda flowers. Children ride their bikes through it for the satisfying squelch and their tyres leave deep tracks crossing and recrossing the carpet as it decays into slush, for in this climate beauty and decay are closely related (88).

In ironic contrast with the embrace of the Byron Bay light, under the 'pure white spire' of the Presbyterian church of her mother's faith there is no protection for the Walker women, and in Grafton the pubescent Shirley Walker endures and resents an eminent child molester's furtive gropings. I remember my own painful experiences in this guilt-ridden domain, where the innocent female-child-victim becomes somehow responsible for her violation, blamed simply for being there: 'She's ready for it.' was the phrase. And 'she' is unable to accuse or tell the truth without being outcast: scapegoated as a liar or a Lolita. I remember the old man next door behind the mulberry tree up the backyard in my five-year-old endless moment at Young Road, Lambton; I remember the black-frosted curate at All Saints' rectory of a Saturday morning in my private Confirmation class (my reading of Darwin has caused me to be pulled out of group Catechism), and I still cringe as his long bony fingers edge over my shoulders whilst he chastises me in holier-than-thou modulated tones for calling the story of Adam and Eve myth and metaphor. I am still nauseous when I

recall my uncle with his hand perpetually up my skirts from now-we-are-six until well over twenty; the last time was a Christmas lunch at my grandmother's table, to which my father finally bore witness and exploded.

These experiences are not unique; we were white female about-to-be women in a frontier land where, but a generation or two earlier, the wholesale rape of black women was the usual aftermath of a massacre, the blood of their black kin still warm on their violators' white hands. Merv Lilley writes with unparalleled candour of one such respected farmer-husband-father frontier-man's acts of murder and molestation in *Gatton Man* (1994).

Walker's refuge (and later mine, and that of many other young 'post-colonial' females) was in literature and poetry and educational achievement. Having won a bursary at the Leaving Certificate, in 1944 she fled from Grafton and domestic entrapment to the freedom of Teachers' College in Armidale. And teaching was virtually the only bread-winning, qualification-gaining escape route from the prospect of replicating their mothers' lives for intelligent, young, working-class women. Two generations earlier, Miles Franklin lacked this educational opportunity and so lit out from paid domestic-servitude (which she called 'Mary-Anning') to join in womankind's international fight for suffrage and union solidarity in the USA and the UK. Walker would later add her mite to those gains when she beat the sexism of the NSW Education Department's constraints on married women who returned to the service, and gained both tenure and scholarships which enabled her to complete her PhD whilst rearing three children.

A walk around Armidale at this time gives a glimpse of privilege bought by a succession of booming wool cheques. Scattered throughout the city are the blue-brick mansions, some of them minor copies of Tudor manor houses, of those who wish to live as the English do. The gravel drives, the deciduous trees, the laurel hedges, the herbaceous borders with their unfamiliar lilacs and peonies, speak of a transplanted way of life. In the country too there are drystone walls, hawthorn hedges and blackberry bushes, all attempts to recreate an English landscape. It's quite appropriate that this area should be called New England, and not just for its cold climate. Meanwhile the sharp hooves of hundreds of thousands of sheep are making short work of the delicate native grasses and the introduced rabbits have multiplied into millions. Feral cats and foxes, the latter introduced so that the colonial gentry could ride to hounds, have all but wiped out the smaller bush animals. This is the story of a people who just don't understand the country and are plundering and ruining it. It's only in the lean, clean, austere outlines of the high country against the frosty sky, and the springtime drifts of yellow everlasting along the roadside, that it can still be seen. (131)

This portrait of Armidale in 1944 remains pretty accurate today, although Walker's 'shaping perception' (as she relished her own privileged entry through the training college's Ionic-columned portals) is noticeable in the wonder at, and the exotic horticultural detail of the ruling-class's re-shaping of the bush landscape in order to create from it the deciduous woods and ordered gardens of the Home Counties; a truly land-scaped 'New' England. Walker also recalls (perhaps anachronistically) the 'lean, clean, austere ... high' country of Judith Wright's poetic imagination and ecological concerns. Wright's

work would become the subject of Walker's PhD thesis in the late 1970s. Autobiographical memory can be a trickster of a thing that sometimes re-casts the past through the grid of the future.

Teaching was the twentieth century's favoured occupation for intelligent girls, since it could be 'gone back to' after child-rearing, and frequently was. For Walker it would become a return due to economic necessity, since the farming ventures she undertook with her ex-AIF husband were risky and flood-prone. In 1950 they took up their soldier-settler's ballot-block on Rita Island in the delta of the Burdekin River just south of Townsville and set about re-enacting the 'clearing' of their pioneering progenitors.

Around our tent, pitched in its clearing, lie our 157 acres of future farm. It is broken country and will be hard to clear and hard to irrigate. There is open country with massive Moreton Bay gums, smaller cocky-apple trees in their thousands, and pandanus palms to remind us that we are now in the tropics. These open spaces are shoulder-high with coarse grass which flourished in the last wet season and has matured during the long dry. There are but two seasons here: the two or three months of torrential and often cyclonic rain, and the calm and temperate dry season during which the land recovers. The grass is alive with snakes and the carefully stitched nests of green ants hang from many a low limb, promising a fiery and throbbing few hours to anyone who brushes against them....

The block is intersected with dry water-courses that will fill as the wet season progresses. Along these are patches of jungle with Burdekin plum trees, tall palms, impenetrable undergrowth, and thick vines roping everything together. There could be anything in there, and there is, including tropical pythons, gold and black, sinuous and beautiful. The bulldozers will make short work of these places and their creatures. We are entranced with our new world. We fancy that we will be numbered among the first-footers, those who have taken to the virgin bush with axes, saws and now bulldozers in order to cultivate the wilderness (160-61).

And they are literally shaping landscape, but it is resistant to shaping, and the six year long Burdekin experience is not evoked lovingly. The Walkers depart in March 1956 in the wake of a cyclone. Like Rosa Praed leaving Curtis Island off Gladstone nearly three quarters of a century earlier, Shirley Walker felt she'd been too long marooned in a place where men are men and women are powerless and exploited.

They return to northern New South Wales, to her husband's father's abandoned landscape, buying back the farm on a three mile long peninsula between the Clarence River and the Carrs Creek anabranch.

Seen from the air the peninsula looks like a leaf floating on the river, the point downstream in the current, the single gravel road the central rib and the leaf stem attaching it to the mainland upstream at a place appropriately called the Washout. When the river in flood reaches eighteen feet it pours over this narrow stem and the peninsula then becomes an island as much at

the mercy of the water as the flotsam and jetsam on its surface: vast rafts of water hyacinth, drifting logs, the occasional dead dog or cow. In summer the leaf shape is deep green with maize, a chlorophyll factory; in autumn it's clothed in mature corn, gold for the picking, much of it pulled down, smothered and festooned with the most marvellous blue and purple convolvulus. (196)

On their arrival, the house piles and fences are clogged with the debris of the '56 floods, and they collect and burn it all in a cleansing pillar of fire. But in the ensuing eleven years of habitation there they will experience nine devastating floods.

Isolated on the peninsula we ... must fend for ourselves. Our first step when a flood threatens is to get the children out before the water comes over the narrow Washout, the stem of the peninsula, and leave them with friends on high ground. We then move the cattle, the car, the tractor, and the one horse left over from pre-tractor days, a draught mare called Maiden, to one of the few points of high ground on the peninsula. We then sit tight and watch the water's slow rise which, in the eight floods we've been through so far, has only reached one of the lower steps of the house. The 1963 flood is quite different. It comes with so little warning that, by the time we wake one morning after a night of roaring gales and torrential rain, we are cut off at the Washout. Worse still the boat, which is kept moored to a willow tree at the foot of the bank in front of the house, has been swamped and is far down, deep beneath the raging flood waters, swirling and churning on its rope. This is a desperate situation, as the boat will be our only means of escape if the flood comes into the house. My husband strips to his shorts and dives deep down into and under the dark water, finds the boat and somehow drags it, against the current and full of water, to the surface and then up the bank.... This incident, with the father as hero, has become legend in the family: his strength and determination to retrieve the drowned boat and save his family, and the children's certainty that he will deliver them over the dark flood. (203-204)

Walker goes back to teaching and, her love of learning re-ignited, begins to study at night for her degree via distance education from the University of New England in Armidale. It is in order to have the fees paid that she battles the Departmental bureaucracy and gains 'permanent' status - and equal footing with her male colleagues. The farm finally becomes untenable and the family move on.

Once we leave I refuse to revisit ... and the farmhouse there becomes the second of those from which, in my mind, I've been dispossessed. I dream of it constantly and always as it was. But in all my dreams I'm an intruder, floating disembodied through the rooms, terrified that the real owners will return and cast me out with cruel words about trespass and property. The fact is that the old house is now unrecognisable. (217)

David Malouf's *12 Edmondstone Street* (1985) gave testimony to the significance of the first house in the formation of the interior landscape of the creative imagination. This realisation triggered Dorothy Hewett's recall and *Wild Card* (1990) was conceived. Shirley Walker's dreams of the lost houses of her 'second life' as a farmer's wife remind me of the imagery in Chagall's shtetl paintings, of dybbuks, and also of the yearning for places that can never be returned to in much survivor literature from the post-World War Two Jewish diaspora. And I remember that neither my grandmother (nor my mother for that matter) would ever, ever go back to the England she left in 1920. What trauma-filled lost house led to that? And then I remember a Koori friend, an actor damaged by the corruption of too long in Sydney, who did return to Bundjalung country and who found healing in the dwelling places of his ancestors.

I have noticed that many who choose to write their real-life stories as memoir or chronicle tend to elongate the narrative of the first three or four decades and then truncate, minimise or gloss over the decades since, the 'second half' if you like. These include Judith Wright's *Half a Lifetime* (1999), Hewett's *Wild Card*, Oriel Gray's *Exit Left* (1985) and Mona Brand's *Enough Blue Sky* (1995). Is under fifty years is too close? too raw? too likely to hurt or shatter illusions (especially those of children)? potentially too libellous? Walker skims over the decades of her 'third life' in which she gains a doctorate and a lectureship inside the 'hallowed' and 'dimly lit cloisters' of UNE. She hints at academic politics, intrigue, power-plays and plots enough to grace a medieval monastery.

This half-a-life time memoir ends at its beginning: a journey from seven to seventy, and back to the hinterland behind Byron Bay where:

At the top of Byron Street a large roundabout has been superimposed, like an ugly concrete cap, on an ancient crossroads. From the beginning of time, crossroads have been symbolic places of choice; also, because of the cross, of sacrifice. Suicides were buried at the crossroads and murderers strung up on gibbets there, for both were seen to have made criminal choices.

These particular crossroads are older than the first white settlement, and the roundabout cannot erase their centuries of passing, of criss-crossing, of the pursuit of desire. They were first carved out from the rainforest by the restless journeying of the Bundjalung, the Aboriginal people of this area. Later the bullock tracks of the cedar getters etched them deeper and deeper into the red soil. Then came the drays of the first settlers, then the first cars and buses and, later, the frenetic traffic of the century's end. (227-8)

Walker has returned full circle and, in her retirement, is seeking to settle again within the sweeping arc of the Byron light, 'steady as a heartbeat, radiant as Home' (228). She has already confessed her 'ability to see relationships, to make connections': she calls these her 'patterning skills' and they have underpinned her successful academic career in literary criticism and textual analysis.

It is these 'patterning skills' that have enabled Walker to create this microcosmic narrative of her three-generational formative history (her personal mythopoeia) and, through the metaphorical 'Claude-glass' of her memoir, light has been shed on retrospective horizons, providing insights into that process of our collective, 'shaping perception' which creates out of the 'raw matter' of mere terrain that cultural

artefact called 'landscape'.

Once the settler myth-making process has done with idealising the landtakers and has recognised the futility of scapegoating their victims, we may, with Walker, begin to read a different history into (and out of) this shared and sacred place.

Marilla North moved to Queensland from the Blue Mountains a couple of years ago. Following her publication of *Yarn Spinners* (UQP 2001), she is now completing a biography of Dymphna Cusack, and a Ph.D at the University of Queensland.

not in sepia today:



BORDER CONTROL

Faking Literature. By Ken Ruthven. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Reviewed by Kylie O'Connell

The recent Federal election saw both major parties speak of the 'need' for Australia to protect its National (and cultural) borders. The tropes of invasion, border protection and authentic identities are not of course confined to the political arena. Literature itself not only represents or reflects these issues in the story lines it creates, the actual issues also maintain themselves through their very structure as a legitimating system. Just as the people that the government aims to keep out reflects Australian's raced political process and the characteristics on which our National identity is based, literature maintains its cultural borders by rejecting those cultural texts and practices it finds threatening.

Ken Ruthven's recently published *Faking Literature* analyses literary studies' lack of engagement with literary forgeries. He suggests that this is because these fakes expose the very spuriousity of all literature and that accordingly, in an effort to maintain its originality and authenticity, it casts these literary forgeries aside. Ruthven questions the borders around such literary institutions as literary studies, the literary awards system, and book reviewing. He suggests that literary forgeries are opportunities to reflect on the nature of society itself - that if we reject literary forgeries from our field of analysis because they are inherently unethical, 'we will never get beyond the banalities of recognition and denunciation.' Forgeries disrupt the very basis of literature and its structures of intelligibility. By merely exposing the fakes we simply reinforce the primacy of 'originals'. Literary studies should include the study of forgeries in its project and in doing so it would have to acknowledge that literature is produced through fields of intelligibility. This would then allow for the analysis of such fields and a logical progression toward the creation of new types of literature - although Ruthven's analysis does not contemplate this conclusion.

Ruthven deconstructs the division between 'original' and 'fake' literature. Using postmodern theory he analyses the ways in which literature maintains its primacy as original artistry through the operation of authorship, authenticity, signature and autobiography. Literary institutions do not like texts that call their operations into question. Thus, even ficto-critical texts or those texts that question the boundaries of such institutions are criticised by the literary establishment. Admittedly this reader is not confronted with a huge range of ficto-critical texts when venturing into the local bookstore, but this does not mean that the borders between 'real' and 'fake' literature are patrolled that closely. Ruthven's citation of Brian Matthews' award winning *Louisa* is a poor choice since this was a text with much critical attention precisely because its construction questioned the borders between history, literature and biography. Ruthven may be over-valuing the power of the literary institutions to maintain their strict taxonomy of cultural assumptions. Indeed, one of the many unfortunate effects of incidents of literary forgery is that they diminish people's desire to engage in texts that question such forms of writing and in particular their relationship to identity. One should note that there are many reasons why literary forgeries, once exposed, are then ignored. For example, it may be that attention does not want to be given to the model of difference and identity on which the texts and the author's behaviour were ultimately based. While Ruthven's argument is a good one, it leaves this reader wanting to consider related issues about the complexity of representing raced and gender identity. Although Ruthven does make reference to the gendered nature of the signature and to receptions of cultural difference, he falls short of a complex analysis of these issues. The initial reception of these signatures and the subsequent denunciation of the texts once exposed as fraudulent are cynically reduced to 'politically correct responses' to the tyranny of

identity politics.

This reader's desire for a more detailed analysis of these issues is partly due to my being schooled in feminist literary scholarship which has considered many of these questions. Ruthven does refer to some of this more interdisciplinary work, but nonetheless contains his analysis to arguing with the established Literary (with a capital L) discipline. While not wanting to detract from the very good argument he makes about literature, *Faking Literature* is one text in an *ongoing* debate. Ruthven's suggestion that literary forgeries demand serious attention from cultural analysts infers he does not fully acknowledge or value the significant contributions made in this area by postmodern feminist cultural analysts (despite the early intensive reading that led to the first book on Australian feminist literary criticism). Ruthven may need to heed his own criticism about positing origins.

Ruthven does provide one detailed analysis of what he insists is the *key text* for analysts of literary forgery, namely James Macpherson and his translations of Ossian texts. Ruthven calls this work 'Macphossian literature', indicating the controversy that surrounded Macpherson's 'translations' of these epic Scottish poems. Regardless of, or indeed because of this controversy, these texts became extremely popular and further translations were made in other languages. 'Macphossian literature' provides Ruthven with a model of how questions of history, authorship, translation and authenticity entwine with nationalism and the very establishment of literary institutions. A more detailed analysis of other examples of literary forgery would have enabled him to flesh out the very different ways in which these same categories - authorship, signature, authenticity and nationalism - enmesh themselves in the production of literature. The operation of these categories in the work of the 'first Aboriginal novelist' Mudrooroo and the creation of an Australian literary identity is very different to that which saw the establishment of the origins of a Gaelic poetic tradition. A more detailed analysis of significant literary forgeries, or the function of author identity (as in the case of Mudrooroo), is put aside in favour of a listing of different examples of literary forgery, fakes and farces. While this is in itself interesting it does not fully advance Ruthven's argument about the spuriousity of literature itself.

Faking Literature does make a contribution to the ongoing debates surrounding writing, identity and difference. Ruthven's consideration does point out that these incidents in the world of literature are not to be ignored for they are a window onto our systems of signification and legitimacy. They provide insight into how literature (like politics) deceives us all.

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LOVE'S LABOURS

Love Upon the Chopping Board, by Marou Izumo and Claire Maree. Melbourne: Spinifex, 2000.
Reviewed by Tania Oost

Love Upon the Chopping Board is a biography, or duography, co-written by Japanese born Marou Izumo and Australian born Claire Maree (or JJ as she refers to herself). Meeting in a bar in Shinjuku Ni-Chome, Tokyo, Marou and Claire soon fall in love, move in together and become politically involved in gay liberation efforts in Japan. This book is their combined accounts of their relationship and of the subversive joys and oppressive hardships to be found when living as a gay couple in a heterosexist environment.



Love Upon the Chopping Board effectively elucidates the entrenched oppression inherent in heterosexist and patriarchal bureaucracy, and always these two women are inspiring for their uncompromising confrontation with the powers-that-be. In Japan, for example, it is unheard-of to live legitimately as a gay couple. While straight couples must marry to gain the full legal rights of a family, this is not an option open to, or even often desired by lesbian couples. However, those lesbian women who would prefer to be 'protected' under family law have occasionally adopted their partners in a pseudo mother-daughter relation in order to secure the legal papers and rights that would be afforded to a conventional Japanese family. This hardly seems ideal because the 'mother' could conceivably hold more power in the relationship than the 'daughter' and, if the relationship ended, who would have the right over property? Izumo explains that in order to gain the social recognition that they both need and have a right to, they must not participate in the very institutions which oppress them and that efface their real identities. Instead they follow closely the sentiments of Hashimoto Osamu who writes that 'lovers throw away conventions and promises of love, to fly beyond the earth. If these lovers fall to earth, it will be because of the gravitational pull of single pieces of paper.' (10)

Yet it is these small pieces of paper that make such a difference in their lives. Claire Maree provides an insight into being a 'gaijin' or foreigner in Japan and the problems of obtaining visas and accommodation as a foreign woman. She is forced to return to Australia to complete her degree before her visa can be extended in Japan. Finding accommodation back in Japan is difficult for 'single friends' living together, being apparently less reliable than a (presumably nuclear) family. Izumo must provide a respectable family seal, or stamp (either her doctor-father's or another professional's) which functions as a signature and guarantor for any lease.

In many ways living in a lesbian relationship demands that they reinvent the wheel. Together they create the first legal Joint Living Agreement for same-sex couples in Japan, which gives each partner the legal right to decide on what will be done with the property and body of the other upon her death. Their feelings of exclusion and invisibility, both as lesbian individuals and as a legitimate couple, lead them almost inevitably towards positive political action. From their tiny one room apartment, which they share with long-time feline companion Nyan Nyan, they instigate and organise protests, gay-pride parades, plays and underground magazines. In its detail these chapters resembles a 'how to' guide for arranging and staging such events.

Many of Izumo's chapters diverge from this theme and she provides a compelling and insightful account of her upbringing in a very traditional and patriarchal Japanese family. She was raised to be submissive and to use submissive language towards her father, and when she questioned her role in the family, she was told simply that it is her place because she is a girl. Secrecy and denial were the silent rule in her home and Izumo feels unable to ever discuss her own desires or sexuality within the family, for 'it is better to say nothing' than to disrupt the family. Her feelings of indignation, anger and frustration throughout her account are palpable. She also shares with the reader her first true love, her elopement and eventual abandonment as a young woman, and one gets the feeling her stories are told for their cathartic effect.

Each chapter shifts from one topic and voice to another in a kaleidoscope of personal childhood memories, experiences, Japanese lesbian history, and a 'how to' guide for political activism. Being mainly composed of several chapters originally published in Japanese and solely written by Izumo, Maree's own contribution comes only in this second edition published for English readers. Perhaps for this reason, it at times seems disjointed and unsure of what it means to say. Nevertheless it provides a nice insight into the women's relationship, and into their determined personalities. Its historical references are also a compelling read for the uninitiated.

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THE NOVEL OF GOOD INTENTIONS

Faith Singer, by Rosie Scott. Sydney: Hodder, 2001. 327 pp.

Reviewed by Margaret Henderson

Given the potential subject matter of rock music and its importance to culture more generally, surprisingly few Australian novels about rock'n'roll have been written. There are satires by Linda Jaivin, Justine Ettler, and David Foster but (rather like musicians themselves) few writers use rock music as a vehicle for serious social critique. Rosie Scott's latest novel, *Faith Singer*, however, steps into this territory, as a continuation of Scott's role as novelist of social problems. So *Faith Singer* seemingly promises some welcome relief from the apolitical, personalist, and family-focussed narratives typifying recent Australian fictions of the contemporary.



Scott is very much a writer of heroines: strong, feisty, sisterly, yet staunchly hetero-sensual types with a political analysis and a social conscience, who do battle with a dehumanising society. For instance, in *Feral City* we had the two activist sisters, Faith and Violet, battling the wasteland of post-Rogernomics New Zealand. In *Faith Singer* there's the ex-rock star, Faith, our narrator, who works in a café in King's Cross and takes in homeless, drug-addicted youth. As her name suggests, Faith indeed 'sings' a particular kind of political faith, expressed through her mothering role that is also part of the healing process after losing her daughter to a drug overdose. She befriends a teenage prostitute, Angel, and tries to save her from a similar fate. Tempting dreams of Faith's past musical glories and a possible comeback provide interludes to this mother-daughter (melo)drama.

Unfortunately, one of the book's major weaknesses is how Faith is written. While she is meant to be colourful, warm, complex, astute, a bit of wild girl, Faith ends up as a character riddled with clichés. There is a heavy reliance on her overly descriptive monologues, and some of these are absolute cringe material, for example, at her comeback concert: 'It was as if the music had stirred up the dumb grieving that lies at the heart of all of us; our inarticulate longing for understanding and forgiveness. That hopeful ragged singing out of the darkness seemed to be coming from the very depths of the people there, direct from some universal place of yearning tenderness' (318-19). (Compare this with the climax to *Feral City* - the similarities are uncanny.) This typifies our Faith: sentimental, a bit overwritten, straining for the poetic image, and with lashings of stodgy humanistic pop psycho-philosophy. Our wild woman actually is fairly predictable, and in her self-help platitudes masquerading as worldly wisdom, she becomes pretty annoying.

Another weakness is the lack of a convincing sense of Faith's career in rock music. Given our Australian indie rock heroines of Faith's generation such as Chrissie Amphlett or Annaliese Morrow, or further afield, Chrissie Hynde or Debra Harry, or even in less alternative genres such as Stevie Nicks, it's hard to make any connection with Faith's rendering of rock'n'roll life and how it affects the girls. It's quite an achievement to make someone who is supposedly an ex-star sound so dull and nice. I sure wouldn't have bought her records or have written her name on my pencil case. On a more pedantic note (though it is symptomatic of the lack of authenticity that troubles the rock narrative), some of Scott's references to rock music are suspect. Faith reminisces about Bruce Springsteen's album *The Ghost of Tom Joad* as if it was in the dim distant past, but it was only released in 1995. I think she got it mixed up with the far more canonical *Nebraska*.

The mother-daughter/savior-junkie plot allows Scott to evoke place graphically: there's plenty about King's Cross's underbelly but also its vitality, and this is one of the book's stronger aspects. This setting also gives Scott a range of semi-exotic character types to work with: trannies, junkies, pimps, pushers, the kind-hearted café proprietor, the waitress-observer of the Cross's rich pageant, and the respectable establishment types who feed on this sub-economy. As was the case with Faith, however, the description of characters is marred by cliché. For instance, the recurrence of descriptions of street kids being 'as beautiful as angels', 'angelic', 'angel-like', and a penchant for the word 'primal'. And of course her adopted daughter Angel is beautiful, imaginative, dreamy, and needs a mother. But will she succeed in giving up smack, or will she go the way of Faith's daughter? The problem is the predictable handling of the material and the intrusive narration by Faith. In this book, the moral universe is clear cut.

Scott uses the Cross to expose not only the tragedy of teenage homelessness, prostitution, and drug addiction but to locate it as part of a wider social decay and malaise, which could be termed the heartlessness at the core of capitalism. The solution offered by Scott is Faith's 'good works': that is, an ability to construct nurturing spaces and relationships, and a valorisation of an inherent human creativity. Faith as mother figure, an alternative to the nuclear family, and her own idiosyncratic career path/life is a stark counterpoint to the victims of the system that surround her. Hence the book's emphases on female friendship, art, and the domestic. This importance of alternative modes of family, nurturing, and so on, was central to Scott's vision for an emancipatory political future in *Feral City* and has much to commend it. And Scott is one of the few contemporary novelists who can be bothered getting angry and trying to write political novels. Although in both *Feral City* and *Faith Singer*, it is a politics with a too sweet, too soft heart: bordering on the sentimental and the feminine rather than the feminist. I suspect that this softness arises from Scott's mode of representing politics as a strange mix of nineteenth century naturalist prose, soft left ideology, and social workerly concern. The result is a politics that seems outdated and overly optimistic for the realities it confronts. Scott's anger at the injustices of the system is genuine; I'm just not sure that heroines like Faith and highly descriptive mimetic writing are the answer. And I still find it weird and disappointing that a book covering this kind of subject matter in such a setting can end up dull and predictable, for all Faith's passionate pronouncements about life, politics, and art. The language of punk was invented for just such a historical conjuncture.

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LIFE IN A WORLD OF MIRRORS

Playing Madame Mao. By Lau Siew Mei. Rose Bay NSW: Brandl and Schlesinger, 2000. 316 pp.
Reviewed by Shirley Tucker

History has cast Madame Mao as an enthusiastic instigator of many of the “excesses” of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Tried as a member of the “Gang of Four” in 1980, Jiang Ching, aka Madame Mao, ex-actress and driving force behind the proletarian operas and films that inspired millions, was sentenced to life imprisonment for her part in the murders, imprisonments and desecration of culture that characterized her husband's rule of China. I don't recall hearing of a Mrs. Mao during Mao's reign and, even today, little has been written about her. Apart from Ross Terrill's highly regarded biography, *Madame Mao: The White-Boned Demon*, which attempts to present her as an archetypal woman warrior, most accounts agree that the woman who no longer appears in Chinese history books was a most unpleasant, vindictive and opportunistic creature with few, if any, redeeming qualities.*



Despite having such a reviled subject as her main character, Lau Siew Mei skillfully manages to avoid the question of whether Madame Mao was as bad as all that. Instead, she presents her in many contradictory roles played by an actress in Singapore who eventually takes over the character and the writing of her script. *Playing Madame Mao* is a novel about life as theatre with an intensely personal narrative set against a larger than life but not nostalgic history of dynastic China. The reader is presented with a sequence of appearances and illusions created by the shifting perspectives of the key players; actress Chiang Ching, her dissident husband Tang Na Juan, and her journalist friend Roxanne (a character based on Roxanne Witke, author of *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing*). The movement between each first person point of view is mediated by third person narrative, and this enables a merging of history and legend, myth and fiction to create a world filled with uncertainty and change that is reflected in the characters' lives.

Despite its focus on such an enigmatic figure, Lau also avoids delivering the sort of autobiographical text that Australian audiences have come to expect from diasporic Asian women writers. In *Playing Madame Mao*, identities and any politics that attach to them are undermined by Lau's fascinating foregrounding of the complexities of representation itself and its role in oppressive social and political practices. Chiang Ching, an actress who struggles to see herself in the mirror, acts the part of ex-actress Madame Mao. Tang has difficulty recognizing himself in his roles as husband, dissident writer for a Catholic newspaper and political activist. Roxanne's ambition, mirrored in her husband's treachery to Tang, similarly strives in her roles as well-respected and well-paid journalist and one-time friend to Chiang Ching. One of the many strengths of this narrative *noir*, therefore, lies in its highly literary enactment of each character's search for freedom and love against an impossibly constrained and regulated political and social world.

Playing Madame Mao is also a novel of insinuation. The line between the real and the imagined is blurred as Ching struggles to retain a sense of self that is set apart from the woman that she plays each night. They share many similarities apart from their names, as Ching appears to adopt some of Madame Mao's idiosyncratic behaviours, and as she becomes increasingly aware of the mirror people; the same vengeful creatures of the underworld that once influenced the thoughts and actions of Madame Mao. While Madame Mao was exiled in prison, Ching is exiled in Sunnybank Hills, Brisbane, in what seems

an ironic choice of location for her demise as the reviled Madame Mao.

Given the extraordinarily large thematic tapestry that Lau has chosen; freedom, oppression, political intrigue, betrayal, change and stasis, the real and the imagined, it is perhaps not surprising that this first novel from an undoubtedly talented writer has some minor flaws. While surface observations beautifully reflect the inner worlds of each character, I found some of the symbolism a little obscure. For example, during Roxanne's final visit, Ching accuses her of smelling of fish. As fish are associated with perfection and the presence of the mirror people, it is unclear what conclusion to draw from Ching's accusation. While slipperiness is itself an important part of this narrative, sometimes there was not quite enough (for me) to grasp. But perhaps this is the point and Lau has simply drawn a line under any more tiresome explanations of Chinese cultural customs. In view of this I suspect that this novel will not attract the kind of popularity that many other novels by young Brisbane-based authors enjoy and it may not make its way onto university reading lists. Rather than lending itself to readings based purely on the politics of identity, *Playing Madame Mao* provides a more complex examination of power, politics and the personal in its finely crafted appraisal of how representation is an inherent component of political and social oppression.

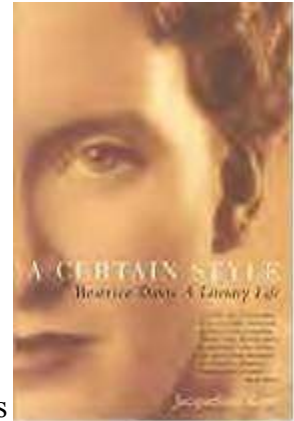
Shirley Tucker is a lecturer in Contemporary Studies at the Ipswich Campus of The University of Queensland.

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- *Hecate* readers, as usual, will have been better informed, in this case by Susan Gardner's article "'The Enemy of Women's Liberation': A Response to Roxane Witke's *Comrade Chiang Ching*,' *Hecate* 4.1 (1978): 25-46.

PRECARIOUS POWER

A Certain Style: Beatrice Davis - A Literary Life. By Jacqueline Kent. Melbourne: Viking Books, 2001.
Reviewed by Maryanne Dever

The Literature Fund of the Australia Council recently granted \$20,000 to Penguin Books to fund 'intensive one-to-one professional support' from freelance editors for ten newly emerging writers. It seems that important developmental editorial work - once a core publishing activity - can now only be provided by publishing houses when it is subsidised by the federal government. In an era of commodity publishing, the multinational conglomerates that dominate the Australian scene have sought to improve profit margins by cutting back on full-time editorial staff, so that in-house editing is now rare and proof-reading almost non-existent. In this world of skimping and outsourcing, neither emerging nor established writers have much prospect of building a long-term professional relationship with company staff. Jacqueline Kent's biography of Beatrice Davis (1909 - 1992), one of Australia's foremost literary editors, takes readers into a world of writing, editing and publishing far removed from today's market-driven imperatives. While those working within the publishing industry have long recognised the influence and legacy of Beatrice Davis, Kent's biography will do much to consolidate wider understanding of her impact on generations of Australian writers.



After completing her BA at the University of Sydney and serving an editorial apprenticeship on the *Medical Journal of Australia*, Davis joined Angus and Robertson in 1937. Working first as a proof-reader and sales assistant, she was soon after appointed as Angus & Robertson's first full-time in-house book editor. Kent's account of Davis' subsequent career is a story of change, not only for Davis personally, but for Australian publishing: her story is inextricably entwined with that of Angus & Robertson, and the rise and subsequent decline of what was once Australia's leading publishing house. In this way, Kent's study joins important works like *A History of the Book in Australia 1891-1945* (UQP 2001) edited by Martyn Lyons and John Arnold in making a welcome contribution to our understanding of the history of publishing and book production in Australia.

Although the greater part of her work at Angus & Robertson involved editing non-fiction works like *The Australian Blood Horse*, it is to the literary side of Davis' professional life that Kent pays greatest attention. As general editor at Angus & Robertson from the late 1930s through to the early 1970s, Davis played a formidable role in the fostering of Australian literary talent across those decades. *A Certain Style* is structured largely around Davis' relationships with prominent Australian writers such as Eve Langley, Ernestine Hill, Xavier Herbert, Hal Porter, Ruth Park and Darcy Niland. Drawing heavily on archival sources, Kent teases out the often intense and complicated working relationships that Davis developed with these figures. A prolific letter writer, she was extraordinarily diligent in keeping up communication with her authors, encouraging, cajoling, hectoring, and admonishing them by turns. Through her letters to different writers we gain a sense of her capacity to bolster inexperienced young authors, to deliver measured criticism to those who sought her professional opinion, and to balance firmness with flirtation. Some like Niland and Park found in Davis a mentor whose judgement was critical to their developing sense of themselves as professional writers as they struggled to earn a living. 'A bit of encouragement and advice from the right person', Park wrote to her, 'does so much to smooth out the rough places, of which we've had quite a few lately.'

Other relationships however, proved less straightforward. After discovering Eve Langley's *The Pea Pickers* among the entries for the 1941 S.H. Prior Memorial Prize and strongly advocating its publication by Angus & Robertson, Davis was then faced with Langley's lengthy disintegration and the delicate job of corresponding over many years with a troubled woman whose subsequent manuscripts - sometimes delivered in enormous batches - were not publishable then, even with the most sensitive editing.* A different order of difficulty existed in relation to authors such as Xavier Herbert and Hal Porter whose egos were only matched by their petulance and occasional perfidy. Davis exhibited enormous skill and patience in managing these authors who proved to be at once demanding, manipulative, sulking and bullying and who clearly never doubted for a moment that they should be accorded priority in their dealings with her or that, in addition to regular editorial duties, she would happily serve as selfless mentor, muse, mother, part-time analyst - and, according to some, occasional lover. The glimpses Kent offers into various writers' careers through their relationships with Davis will likely send many readers back to full-length biographies and memoirs to discover more. But what is communicated here is a measure of the often unacknowledged work that went into the making of Australian fiction in these years, particularly how individual works that now form part of the canon of Australian fiction were shaped through these intense and sometimes difficult exchanges between an individual author and an editor.

But no matter how clearly Davis' voice emerges from the fragments of correspondence quoted here, she nevertheless remains a somewhat enigmatic figure. Behind the well-honed professional persona, significant and interesting contradictions persist. Even while Davis was accorded considerable influence within her own department, men with less experience and talent were routinely granted greater status and influence within the firm and one is left wondering how she really felt about this. The same Davis who could be prissy and prim with respect to a novel's content, appears to have been anything but prim after a few whiskeys of an evening and rumours circulated as to the more colourful aspects of her private life. At times there is a slightly voyeuristic element to the attempts the biography makes to reconcile the professional woman and the private being and perhaps more attention might have been paid to drawing out the tensions Davis inevitably experienced in her endeavours to be taken seriously in an industry unused at that time to women, let alone a married woman, exercising relative power and autonomy in a world where considerable sanctions remained for women who stepped beyond the bounds of convention. The account of the final years of Davis' career in publishing is a poignant one. Her personal travails mirror shifts in the publishing industry itself from being a rather genteel profession with little concern for commercial imperatives to becoming a market-driven industry where books are simply products like any other. While Davis may have had some minor successes in battling with the changing ownership and management structures as Angus & Robertson moved into the 1970s, publishing as she knew it and her place in it had changed irrevocably. But it is the blending of a study of a single career with an effective mapping of the history of a firm and of an industry that is Kent's particular achievement in this book.

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* For a full account of these, see Robyn Colwill's recently completed PhD thesis, 'Corridors of Memory, Passages of the Past: The Retrieval of Eve Langley', School of English, Media Studies and Art History, The University of Queensland, 2001.

COWRIE RIDES AGAIN

Song of the Selkies. By Cathie Dunsford. Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2001.

Reviewed by Meriel Watts

In this fourth novel in the Cowrie series, our hero Cowrie takes us on a journey through the ancient mysteries of the Orkney Islands. *Song of the Selkies* provides a diversion from the political activism that is central to the previous books in the series. Here, the underlying traditional storytelling theme of the previous books finds prominence and Cowrie as warrior woman takes a back row seat. The talkstory tradition of the indigenous people of Aotearoa, Hawaii and North America emerges as a binding element between the various characters, most of whom have met through their performances at the Edinburgh Festival. Add to the chemistry an Inuit woman and a conservative Brit and you have an unusual mix of lesbian and heterosexual women that takes some time to gel as they learn each other's ways.

After the festival the group journeys together to the Orkney Islands to stay with Ellen, one of their number. But when Ellen becomes Morrigan on her return home, Cowrie begins slowly to unravel the ancient mythology of the Selkies. Is it possible that Selkies really exist, living sometimes as seals and sometimes as humans? Why does fisherwoman Morrigan disappear for long stretches at nights? The superb descriptions of swimming through the sea, twisting and turning and dodging each other through the water, hiding in the seaweed to avoid the great predatory sharks, and of seal bodies slipping sensuously about each other leave the reader longing to share this watery world with the Selkies. Whilst in previous novels we have feasted upon by Dunsford's superlative descriptions of food, this time we are treated to equally wonderful imagery of the sea, biting winds, soaring and swooping birds, barren landscape, and all that is the natural beauty of these wild and magical islands far away in the cold North Sea. As we imbibe the magic of nature, so too we take in the magic of the standing stones and the long ago women's community at Skara Brae. Our band of modern day storytellers involves many of the locals in a talkstory session beside this ancient monument to a long forgotten culture, and gradually the mythology of these lands emerges, including that of the Selkies.

Song of the Selkies is set entirely in the harsh climate of these northern islands, and the reader might miss the warmth of the Pacific and the camaraderie of Cowrie's marae in Aotearoa. But while we must wait for the next book for a return to her home, this one provides us with a delightful and different experience - yet one with dreams that feed the soul and imagery that nourishes the senses just as much as the previous books in the Cowrie series. Even the reader who has never been to the Orkney Islands will come to feel she knows this wild and enchanting place.

Meriel Watts is author of several books including *Poisons in Paradise*, director of S&H: Organic New Zealand and is an activist leader in the fight to keep New Zealand GE Free:

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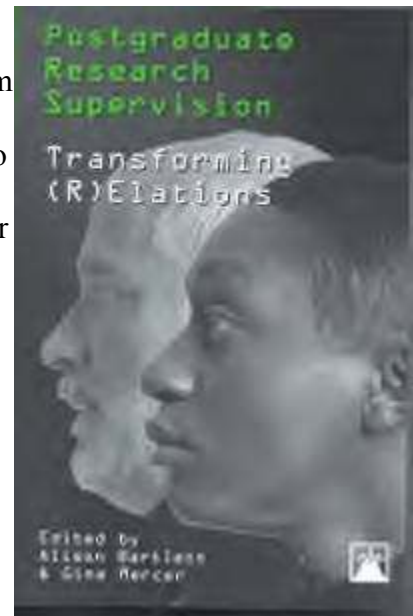
'TALKING DIRTY': SITUATING POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Postgraduate Research Supervision. Transforming (R)Elations. Alison Bartlett and Gina Mercer, eds.
New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

By Gillian Whitlock

Last year a colleague discussed with me his plans for a large international conference to be held here in Australia in mid 2002. From the very start the idea of a day set aside for postgraduate students was one of the priorities. This day was, in his view, a unique opportunity to place postgraduate research and the needs of postgraduate students at centre-stage, and as the focus of attention for researchers renowned for their work in our sub-discipline. And so the fourth and last day of the conference was set aside for this purpose.

A week or so ago at the end of a session when we had discussed several chapters of her thesis which had excited us both, one of my PhD students raised an issue which was causing her some grief. A conference which would gather the very best people in our research area here next year was organised in a way that made postgraduate students second class citizens. She regretted identifying herself to organisers as a postgraduate student, for this meant she was scheduled to give her paper on the last day of the conference, and at a more remote campus location. She felt sure many delegates would leave early, shop for books, or otherwise avoid the day. From her perspective, the plans for postgraduates produced an awkward and unnecessary split in what should function as an integrated research community.



Thankfully the dilemma was quickly sorted out. She (and others) made their case to conference organisers in a way which led to a rapid reshaping of plans for the conference sessions. The postgraduate day remains, but postgraduate students will present papers throughout the conference.

This incident raises issues which are at the heart of Bartlett and Mercer's collection of essays about the codes and conduct of postgraduate research in Australian universities. How are relations between postgraduate students, their supervisors and the larger research community best conceptualised? What are the needs of postgraduate students in a tertiary sector which is ongoing rapid transformation? How are good working relations established and sustained during the long passage of the research thesis? As the small story above indicates, good intentions do not necessarily produce good results. Gestures of respect and concern can have unintended outcomes. And this is so because this relationship is situated in a nexus of power relations which need to be negotiated with care by both supervisor and supervisee. It is a highly complex and vulnerable personal, social, institutional relationship.

The intention of this collection is to bring a cluster of different approaches and ways of thinking about this relationship together. Many of the essays are personal, and the collection begins with Bartlett and Mercer's subjective discussion of their own relationship as student and supervisor. In the past decade there has been a growing body of literature on postgraduate research supervision. Some of this is the 'how to' genre and, as Mercer points out, when we set out to become supervisors many of us feel

overwhelmed by the commitment and responsibility which it involves, and in need of good guidance. Most importantly, we also set out with our own history as a postgraduate student, and this shapes our practices in powerful ways. The editors argue that much of the material currently available fails to recognise how supervision is embedded in various forms of inequality and difference.

Characteristically this literature deals with academic preoccupations about topic, research methodology and thesis writing, with little attention to the commitments, identifications and complexities that arise due to the impact of family responsibilities, cultural and racial difference, differently-abled bodies, and sexualities. The point is, that the nature of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee in the Australian system of postgraduate research, a close and exclusive working relationship over a long period of time, means that these considerations are vital.

The intention here is to trigger a particular kind of thinking about postgraduate pedagogy. By drawing on metaphors and notions of mutual and cooperative interrelationship – the conversation for example, or the narrative made up together – and by focussing on intimate and detailed stories about actual postgraduate supervision experiences which become emblematic stories the editors seek to develop a *situated* knowledge. “We want to make space for 'talking dirty'... for slipping beneath the 'cleaned up' official discourses of the institution, for going beyond the hygienic checklists of the 'how-to' guides'(5). Clearly, and quite specifically, feminist methodologies are important in generating this approach to postgraduate pedagogy. For example the concern with difference, and the importance of the subjective and experiential as important ways of knowing, the interest in the specifics of social, cultural and corporeal circumstances, and the search for more egalitarian ways of representing this relationship suggest the influence of feminist thinking. Germinal here is the idea that current dominant ways of conceptualising postgraduate teaching and learning, organised in terms of the master/apprentice model, simply don't work for women academics. In this way, rethinking postgraduate pedagogy is part of a more wide-ranging attempt to dismantle the fiction of the disembodied scholar. Much of the existing literature on supervision presumes a highly generalised 'student' and 'supervisor' as the rational and autonomous individuals of liberal discourse, and this eschews the importance of desire and anxiety, pleasure and emotion in the work of pedagogy.

Inevitably power is an important issue here. As Barbara Grant points out in the essay which introduces the notion of 'dirty talk' to the collection, two senses of power are relevant to an analysis of supervision. The first is the notion of power as structured and unequal – supervisors, because of their institutional position and function, have more power than students. Second, the more interactive and intersubjective sense of power is important in conceptualising this relationship, for it figures a power relation which is lived out in productive but constrained ways. The desire to shift thinking about postgraduate supervision to that more interactive and situated model is the recurrent theme and purpose of these essays. Grant, for example, points out how codes of student conduct legitimate unrealistic pictures of supervision as a fundamentally reasonable practice rather than risky business. Bob Smith's essay also reframes postgraduate pedagogy with particular attention to the limitations of administrative discourses of 'best practice.' The instrumental logic that reduces supervision to roles, responsibilities, attributes of quality, and structured teaching strategies also works to obscure and deny that power/knowledge nexus which is at the heart of postgraduate work, and it also installs the rational subject in centre stage.

As a collection of emblematic stories these chapters work brilliantly to produce a more situated perspective. Balatti and Whitehouse discuss eloquently the loss of power they experienced as they moved from busy careers to postgraduate studies, 'out of the loop and into the dark'. Here, in the 'dark', they learn the currency of photocopier pin numbers, the various codes which regulate access to badly needed resources in resource depleted departments, and the all-important hidden curriculum. Kelly and Ling place postgraduate studies in the context of a 'posttraditional era', a time when rapid technological advances blur boundaries between groups, nations and identities, where relationships take on new meanings and require new skills and understandings. They argue that postgraduate studies need to be rearranged accordingly. Other agents of change are shifts in the substance of postgraduate studies, and so Perry and Brophy consider the ways that creative writing has entered tertiary Arts courses, and other contributors point to the ways that different histories, shaped by Indigeneity or migrations, for example, fundamentally affect the construction of postgraduate subjectivities.

Altogether some fifty contributors are included in this collection. Together they take up in very diverse ways the desire of the editors to reconfigure ways of thinking about postgraduate supervision. In their own chapter, Bartlett and Mercer offer some ways of imagining new narratives of creative and interactive work between supervisor and supervisee. And so they imagine the supervisor and candidate positioned in the kitchen, cooking up a feast. Or the candidature is analogous to creating a garden/thesis on a patch of spare ground, with the supervisor as the kindly experienced neighbour. Or the postgraduate candidate and supervisor are companions setting out on a lengthy bushwalk together. They suggest that creating a metaphor to represent their relationship is a useful teaching tool to initiate discussion between potential and existing candidates and supervisors. In this way at least a supervisor eager to set out on a bushwalk and a candidate who desires a formal, hierarchical relationship more in the nature of a waltz can quickly establish their difference, and explore ways of accommodating their preferences.

It is a strength of this collection that it does explore consistently various ways towards more collegial and egalitarian postgraduate pedagogies. These alternative narratives do not always recognise the impotence of good intentions against the overwhelming realities of the power relations that structure postgraduate studies (I write this review in the week where postgraduate rankings for Australian Postgraduate Awards are determined.) Nor do they establish clear models of alternative practices in a 'how-to' fashion. But this is as it should be, for the work of essays like this is to encourage a self-reflective approach to postgraduate supervision. The challenge is to invent one's own narrative, metaphor and praxis not just through introspection, in theory and in solitude, but through dialogue with that other half that coexists with you in supervision.

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