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History in Australian Popular Culture 1972-1995

VOLUME 1

HISTORY
IN AUSTRALIAN POPULAR CULTURE
1972-1995

by

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature of Candidate

Production Note:

Signature removed prior to publication.

For
KEITH MORRIS
1920-1982

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In the first two chapters of the thesis, I revise essays written before my doctoral enrolment but necessary to my argument here; they were first published as "At Henry Parkes Motel", Cultural Studies 2/1 (1988), 1-47, and "Things To Do With Shopping Centres", Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism ed. Susan Sheridan (London: Verso, 1988), 193-225. First versions of other chapters have been published as "'On The

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"Great Moments in Social Climbing: King Kong and The Human Fly", Sexuality and Space ed. Beatriz Colomina (Princeton: Princeton University School of Architecture, 1992), 1-51;

"Ecstasy and Economics: A Portrait of Paul Keating", Discourse 14/3 (1992), 3-58. In parts of my Introduction, I draw on

"Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower", New Formations 11 (1990), 5-18, and "Life as A Tourist Object in Australia",

International Tourism: Identity and Change ed. Marie-Françoise Lanfant, John B. Allcock and Edward M. Bruner (London: Sage, 1995), 177-191. The greater part of the Introduction, and Chapter Six ('Lunching for the Republic"), are unpublished.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	i
List of Illustrations	viii
Abstract	ix
Introduction: History in Cultural Studies	1
History, "theory" and cultural studies	1
Period of study: 1972-1995	14
Case study: Sydney Tower	25
A brief review of relevant literature	37
History and the popular	42
Involvement: desire for history	46
Conclusion: "Where are we now?"	51
Notes	57
1. At Henry Parkes Motel	69
Brick Wall	69
<i>The Glimpse</i>	73
<i>Scan</i>	74
<i>Quandary</i>	77
<i>Acceleration</i>	79
<i>U-turn</i>	80
<i>Tour</i>	81
<i>Being there</i>	83
Domestic Pursuits	86
<i>Voyage/home</i>	89

	<i>Man/difference</i>	93
	<i>Theory/tourism</i>	96
	<i>Detective/nomad</i>	102
	Billboards	113
	Notes	132
2.	Things To Do with Shopping Centres	138
	Managing change	141
	Difference and identity	143
	The Ordinary Woman	148
	Pedestrian notes on modernity	155
	Mall genres	167
	Users and designers	173
	A short history of Green Hills	177
	Things to do with history	183
	Shopping for repetition	189
	Notes	194
3.	On the Beach	201
	Home	202
	The family romance	208
	The obvious beach	216
	Epiphany in Martin Place	227
	The Ordinary Australian	232
	Changing the culture	242
	Notes	253

4. Great Moments in Social Climbing	258
Ego Thing	264
<i>Purity and mixity</i>	269
King Kong	274
<i>Evicting practice</i>	284
The Human Fly	294
<i>Strategy and Tactics</i>	299
<i>Rivalry and simulation</i>	307
<i>Home voyage</i>	323
Notes	329
5. Ecstasy and Economics: A Portrait of Paul	
Keating	336
Faith	338
Description	341
<i>Disciplined infallibility</i>	346
Passion	352
<i>Narrowness</i>	358
<i>Voice</i>	364
<i>Eroticising economics</i>	369
Dream and Norm	377
<i>Rationality</i>	383
<i>Love</i>	391
Infinity	399
Notes	407

6. Lunching for the Republic	418
Being and becoming republican	423
Not lunching with Thomas Keneally	435
Postmodern republican non-nationalism	443
The very idea of a national debate	453
Notes	465
 Bibliography	 472

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1	Mother and child at Blacktown Westpoint, 1977 or 1978.	151
1.2	Mother and child as sociological text: <u>The Shopping Centre as a Community Leisure Resource.</u>	154
1.3	Postcard, Indooroopilly Shoppingtown, Brisbane, 1985.	158
1.4	Fortitude Valley Plaza Walkway, Brisbane, 1985.	170
1.5	Entrance to Green Hills, East Maitland, 1985.	172
1.6	Green Hills sign, 1985.	179
4.1	AWA Building, Sydney, 1937	276
4.2	"King Kong, The Moment of Final Decision" PM Advertising, 1989.	278
4.3	"King Kong Drops Fay Gray", PM Advertising, 1989.	279
4.4	<u>King Kong No Gyakushu</u> , Toho, 1967	289
4.5	<u>The Human Fly: Castle in the Clouds!</u> Marvel Comics, 1977	310
4.6	Chris Hilton on the face of Sydney Tower <u>A Spire</u> , Riverheart Productions, 1988	318

ABSTRACT

As cultural studies has consolidated its claim to constitute a distinct field of study in recent years, debate has intensified about its characteristic objects, concepts and methods, if any, and, therefore, its relationship to traditional disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

In History in Australian Popular Culture 1972-1995, I focus on an intersection of cultural studies with history. However, I do not debate the competing claims of "history" and "cultural studies" as academic projects. Rather, I examine the role played by historical discourse in popular cultural practices, and how those practices contest and modify public debate about history; I take "historical discourse" to include argument about as well as representation of the past, and so to involve a rhetorical dimension of desire and suasive force that varies according to social contexts of usage. Therefore, in this thesis I do cultural studies empirically by asking what people say and do in the name of history in everyday contexts of work and leisure, and what is at stake in public as well as academic "theoretical" discussion of the meaning and value of history for Australians today.

Taking tourism and television ("public culture") as my major research fields, I argue that far from abolishing historical consciousness -- as the "mass" dimension of popular culture is so often said to do -- these distinct but globally

interlocking cultural industries have emerged in Australian conditions as major sites of historical contestation and pedagogy.

Tourism and television are, of course, trans-national industries which impact on the living-space (and time) of local communities and blur the national boundaries so often taken to define the coherence of both "history" and "culture" in the modern period. I argue, however, that the historical import of these industries includes the use of the social and cultural spaces they make available by people seeking to publicise their own arguments with the past, their criticisms of the present, and their projects for the future; this usage is what I call "popular culture", and it can include properly historical criticism of the power of tourism and television to disrupt or destroy a particular community's sense of its past.

From this it follows that in this thesis I defend cultural studies as a practice which, far from participating in a "death" or "killing" of history, is capable of accounting in specific ways for the liveliness of historical debate in Australia today.

INTRODUCTION

History in Cultural Studies

Why does cultural studies want history? What does wanting it mean? What new acts of transference will items from the past help cultural studies -- or make it -- perform? How will it be done? How taught? Will there be any room for detailed historical work; or are students of cultural studies bound to rely on great schematic and secondary sweeps through time? Will there be any room for the historical case-study in its pedagogy? What good is it all to you anyway?

Carolyn Steedman¹

History, "theory" and cultural studies

There is a methodological problem often encountered by people working in cultural studies on the very recent "history of the present".² Writing about the difficulties of theorising popular culture in the United States today, Lawrence Grossberg puts it this way:

What do you do when every event is potentially evidence, potentially determining, and at the same time, changing too quickly to allow the comfortable

leisure of academic criticism?³

For my purposes, the problem of stabilising an object of analysis in cultural studies may need be posed in a slightly different way. In the phrase "comfortable leisure", there is a gesture of disengagement from a traditional literary practice which seems less necessary in Australia, where academic critics of anything can presume neither comfort nor leisure as a condition of their work. Nevertheless, Grossberg's question defines a clearly recognisable dilemma, and one which is by no means new nor restricted to a textual criticism grappling with information flows, high-speed temporal forms, and industrial demands for career fast-tracking. It is salutary to remember that already in the 1960s, Henri Lefebvre formulated the problem of Everyday Life in the Modern World by analysing his own abandonment of the original project of the 3 volume Critique of Everyday Life, the first volume of which had appeared in 1947.⁴ Lefebvre said of that volume's "remainder" that:

...this work was never completed or published because the author soon realized that the momentous changes taking place in society at the time had transformed his "subject" to the point of making it unrecognizable or virtually non-existent.⁵

Observing this encounter with disappearing objects in an inaugural text of the study of everyday life, one response

would be to resort to one of those "great schematic and secondary sweeps through time" that allow us to recast our methodological problems in more manageable form as symptoms of a broader cultural "logic",⁶ social "condition",⁷ or epochal "moment" -- postmodern, postcolonial, post-industrial, perhaps even post-historical.⁸ Thus accounted for, rather than solved, problems of method become occasions for rehearsing blockbuster theories of History. When thunderously huge, monolithic Subjects -- The West, Modernity, Fordism ... -- begin to stride and then to topple, in our texts, across vast stretches of world and time ("ever since the Enlightenment, ..."), "notions of historic change take mythical, apocalyptic, or theoretical forms";⁹ there is little room left for historical practice -- or unsettling empirical surprises -- of any kind.

Such sweeps are troubling to many historians, because they threaten to exclude historical work from the field of cultural studies, and to dispense with historical rules of evidence for making historical claims. But this is not only a problem for historians. When cultural critics agree to debate a (largely bibliographic) frame of reference in lieu of an object of study, we in effect use a generic brand of "theory" to avoid asking questions about the status of objects, and differing concepts of evidence and determination, in a multidisciplinary project. The narrative form in which we perform this avoidance is neither new nor specific to cultural studies. However well it may serve to tell a story of hyper-eventfulness and accelerating change, the form is derived -- with the stylistic mediation of widely-imitated philosophers

such as Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida -- from the scholarly tradition of a "History of Philosophy" in which a very few big events take place (it goes without saying, in Europe) over very long periods of time: "ever since Plato, ...", "since Descartes, ...", "since Kant, ...".

Epic rehearsal of great moments in Theory is not the only resort available to the critic caught analysing an object that has ceased to exist or that everyone else has forgotten. My preference is to turn to history for a context prolonging the life of the ephemeral item or "case": saturating with detail an articulated place and point in time, a critical reading can extract from its objects a parable of practice that converts them into models with a past, and a potential for re-use -- thus aspiring to invest them with a future. This is a literary solution (certainly, a use of "detailed historical work" for non-historical purposes), and it favours, however domestic the setting, a picaresque form of narrative: in an endless series of minuscule events, popular heroes act out theoretical logics of formidable complexity against a more or less well-defined social background.

With its own investment in the significance of documents, cases, and exceptions, any "text-based" practice of cultural studies is prone to defer to history as a way of framing its discourse on any sort of change. Historically, this is understandable. The very formality of this deference, however, provokes Carolyn Steedman to ask exactly what our appeals to history mean now, and what we want them to achieve. The point of her questioning, I take it, is not to find cultural studies

wanting as or in history, but to render explicit, in cross-disciplinary discussions of method, a matter of desire. Why do we who want history, want history -- for Steedman, "the most unstable" and "the most impermanent of written forms" -- if not just to use a piece of it, in a stabilising way, "as a building block for a different structure of explanation" (614)?

After all, history dates. "There is nothing deader and colder than old history"; written history "is not just about time, doesn't just describe time, or take time as its setting; rather it embeds time in its narrative structure" (614). This is partly why Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari say that "history will never be rid of dates"; while history recounts "the actions and passions of the bodies that develop in a social field", it also transmits "pure acts intercalated into that development".¹⁰ Steedman, however, asks us consider that the historical enterprise may be dated. Constraints of time and money are eroding the slow, costly practice of archival research on which the modern discipline is founded; "a very odd account" of the past is being shaped by the pedagogical need to base history, cheaply and democratically, on a reading of mass-produced texts (government reports, prose fictions); the paradigm shift whereby one discipline after another "(has) cut its ties to history, strengthened its autonomy with theory"¹¹ continues apace across all academic culture and "the commonplace and secular world of which the academy is a part"; while historians, too, take part in "the abandonment of time in favour of "the culture concept" (620).

Given Steedman's own sobering response to the question of the "good" that history can be -- "perhaps no good at all" (621) -- it would seem unwise for a cultural studies engaged with that commonplace and secular world to turn to history for help. Whether we like it or not, cultural studies is enabled by the culture concept; it is a product of "the general flight from the historical", and the institutional pressures, that Steedman describes; as a pedagogy, it affirms (with Steedman) the value as well as the necessity of cheap, democratic practices. So "wanting history" might be a sort of corporate nostalgia, expressed as what she calls the "politeness" of an academy liberated from the once pervasive dominance of historical understanding, but happy to agree, for old time's sake, that "any rigorous theoretical form or mode of inquiry needs a historical perspective, a proper historicity" (620).

Yet there is, as she says herself, no real choice but to have history. In a host of "studies" courses, history is taught not only from reports and prose fictions but (with no regard for "the 50-year rule"¹²) from films and hastily taped TV shows; documented video editions of films and TV shows; photocopies of any sort of text that can be copied; recorded or live testimonials; "critique" expeditions to museums, galleries, tourist sites and monumental public spaces; great wads of xeroxed theory; from magazines and the morning's newspaper. Taught this way, inflected by the concerns of Aboriginal, feminist, multicultural and (more rarely) gay and lesbian scholarship, history is a set of public debates -- and it is monitored, as such, in the media.¹³ Whatever the balance

in our institutions between the new, "odd" versions of history and the traditional discipline (with which, for the moment, academic power and prestige remains), I am certain that a cultural studies that gamely declared itself post-historical - - or probed too seriously its divergences from what historians of good will can cheerfully recognise as history -- would be consigned in Australia to the spotlit obscurity of the "art world", or the neglected shade of the philosophy seminar.

Does this expansion of the practical activities that can be given history's name help us to deal more confidently with questions of cultural change, or does it simply make our concepts of culture and change more vague? In the pedagogies that I am describing, "wanting history" and wanting to "change the culture" by gaining some purchase on public debate, some influence over what can count in future as a useable past, are desires not easily disentangled: "new" history is a product of mixed motives, and what is interesting about this situation is its utter lack of novelty. If a history "option" is a site of acute awareness that it is now "very difficult to make time into a principle of intelligibility, let alone a principle of identity"¹⁴ (as Marc Augé, an anthropologist, puts it) the intelligibility and identity of history as a discipline of statecraft is not necessarily threatened by this: not in immigrant-based societies and settler states, where the study of culture as disjunctive and contested, and a rendering historic of time itself as a European mode of understanding,¹⁵ may more effectively serve the purposes of nation-building than any discourse on a common past, or a connected and

coherent culture.¹⁶

From this perspective, the impermanence of historians' discourse and disciplinary practices may be less significant than the enduring power of History as the name of a cultural discipline. As Dipesh Chakrabarty eloquently argues, it matters that wanting history is not a primal human desire.¹⁷ We have to be taught to want it, to learn that history is the name of something we lack, and this particular pedagogy of desire and lack has been intimately bound up with nationalism as a project aspiring to govern change. On the other hand, given this history, a longing for history need not be nationalist in impulse or citizenly in force. In cultural studies, it is more likely to be organised by transnational constituents of subjectivity and experience, and by mobile figures of resistance or excess. It follows that "making history" gains lucidity and power as an institutional project from the very impermanence of historical discourse, and the malleability of historical practices, that Steedman describes.

Nor does "wanting history" have to depend on a sense of lacking history, or even on having a sense of history for which "lack" is a relevant category. Desire for history may be created and distributed pragmatically, like the "new domain of positivity" that Stephen Muecke sees "forged under the slogan 'Australia has an Aboriginal Past'".¹⁸ Across a continent, over a relatively short space of time, this slogan has successfully circulated a demand, as well as a desire, from the Black Australian spaces that it helps to organise, to the White Australian spaces it most directly, but not exclusively,

addresses; cited and amplified by many different bodies, relayed between the T-shirt shop and the archive, the media and the museum, the slogan gathers force as a demand for historical recognition, historical work, but also as a demand for desire; it demands that non-Aboriginal Australians learn to want to learn about this past, and to want this past as history.

So any simple reiteration of history's history as the formative, citizenly discipline obscures complicated issues about the placing and address of differing desires for history in different public spaces. Wanting history, non-historians do not usually want just anybody's history, or even simply to be touched by the dignity and authority that historicity still endows. We may want "our own" histories, the more strongly if we do feel denied history, or subjected to history, in the past; or, histories that potentially may have something to do with us -- histories that pressure us, solicit, engage, or confront us, histories unsettling the frameworks in which we desire and evaluate "change". In these fluid conditions, written history as the product of the exacting, vanishing labour that Steedman values as history -- "the uncovering of new facts, the endless reordering of the immense detail that makes the historian's map of the past" (614) -- may not be quite what we want, or all that we might be wanting. Methodological desire alone is rarely strong enough to carry amateurs through thick textual slabs of detail about people, places and times with which we have no lived or imaginable connection. Wanting history, I read for the theory and skip

the facts.

The empirically-minded historian does have a problem with desire in the international as well as interdisciplinary geography of cultural studies. It surfaces near the end of Steedman's essay when she calls her account of a British situation "parochial" in its settings, a US conference and a Routledge book. In an academic context, to be parochial (as the Macquarie Dictionary has it, "confined to or interested only in one's own parish, or some particular narrow district or field") is unengaging, a failure of spatial tact: we fail to touch or be touched by others in a discourse "large" enough to appeal to more than one parochialism. Of course, such failure never threatens all parochialisms equally. Chakrabarty reminds us that because of history, only the history of those "already at the centre of things" is "inherently interesting to others" (103). However, the historian risks parochialism by the very nature of her practice: new facts, an endless reordering of detail, a fine attention to particulars, have no value without a shared frame of reference to make them meaningful to others, and a way of translating what counts as significant change.

But this is not a problem only for historians. In the transnational economy of cultural studies -- centred in the US with its conference and publishing circuits, intellectually managed through the functionally grand narratives of US feminism, multiculturalism, postcolonialism, diaspora, postmodernism -- any analysis of overly specific materials differing too much from US norms runs the risk of a failure to

address; the parochial becomes the pointless. Like speaking as an outsider ("the historian"), pronouncing oneself parochial is a cosmopolitan solution to this: Steedman's remark is tactful, enabling her to launch her questions pointedly at anyone who cares to respond. More usually, what we call "theory" does the work of fabricating an address to the themes and questions deemed "inherently interesting" in a given transnational space.¹⁹ Within such space, theory is the work of extracting a cosmopolitan point from the most parochially constructed or ephemeral "events" in Grossberg's sense -- even when that point is to criticise theory's cosmopolitanism.

Hence the odd, awkward status of theory (rather than history) in cultural studies, where "theory" has in practice had little to do with strengthening the autonomy of the field, still less to do with dissolving the autonomy of other disciplines, and a great deal to do with cross-cultural and interdisciplinary translation, negotiation and power play.²⁰ Cultural theory is a medium of diplomacy. This is why the term simultaneously refers, in media as well as academic usage, to a small but internationally recognised canon of names; to an esoteric sub-philosophical jargon; and to a populist mode of performance that aesthetically sign-posts its mixing of expository and narrative (sometimes "academic" and "personal") rhetorics. All three practices are ways of creating a partial and often temporary commonality between people with little in common.

This why theory can be described, on the one hand, as an "object of exchange"²¹ to be criticised for its First World

presumptions and its homogenising powers, even as it is practised, on the other hand, as a utopian work of reflection on the conditions in which translation between heterogeneous, politically unequal and conflicting knowledges (with, perhaps, unevenly shared histories of contact) may occur. Criticising the "currency" of theory is part of this process. So is its tactful use to relieve contextually more powerful others of the burden of their failure to desire the "facts" of our history.

Here, Steedman's questioning admits its most challenging inflection: is cultural studies, then, effectively bound to schematic and secondary ways of dealing with past? In this thesis, my answer is "no": cultural studies entails a flexible relation both to history and to the sweeping claims, spatial as well as temporal, circulating now as theory. However useful her challenge may be, Steedman's all-embracing opposition between history and theory (of which 'the culture concept' works as a metonym in her text) makes it difficult to think in practical ways about the third term, "cultural studies". For example, the pressing question for practitioners is not whether cultural studies can make "room" for historical case studies. Of course it can. The question is what a "case study" might mean -- and what it can do -- in cultural studies.

I share Lawrence Grossberg's preference for the term "context", rather than "case study", to describe a method as well as an object of cultural studies research. Grossberg defines a context as a "specific bit of everyday life" positioned between culture, understood as "a specific body of

practices", and particular social forces, institutions and relations of power.²² Cultural studies works to understand how contexts are made, unmade and remade, and how contexts change the meaning and value of cultural practices. A "case study" in cultural studies would then minimally involve an act of delimiting a context. It follows that it really is impossible to generalise about the role of "time" and history in cultural (case) studies. For one of the few assumptions that unites the field is that contexts -- including contexts of research -- are always dynamic, and perpetually open to change.

For this reason, I have not set out in this thesis to review the vast theoretical literature produced in many disciplines on the relations between "history" and "culture" (not to mention "time" and "space").²³ Except when a context of analysis makes it useful to do so, I do not examine the work of historians reflecting on "culture", whether as concept or research field. Having learned a great deal from them, I do not review either the rich debates about historiography as a cultural practice ("writing")²⁴ or the intellectually poor polemics proclaiming these debates a threat to history itself²⁵, and I leave aside the fascinating studies written by historians of their own professional culture.²⁶ I also restrict my scope when I do come to review theories bearing on the problem of "history", in the double-edged colloquial sense of "significant past and present events" and "discourse on the past" -- in popular culture. This is not a thesis in the philosophy of history,²⁷ and I have written elsewhere about the problem (touched on briefly in Chapter Five of the thesis)

of historicism in theories of popular culture.²⁸

This is a thesis in cultural studies, not cultural theory. It follows from my understanding of this distinction that I cannot adequately answer Steedman's question of desire, or Grossberg's question of method, solely in argumentative terms. I must also define an empirical context that makes these questions matter. In the next two sections, I do this by framing and examining a mundane experience of a changing object that inflected the project of this thesis, and obliged me to "want" to think about popular cultural constructions of history.

Period of study: 1972-1995

When I first envisaged this thesis in 1989, I proposed to study the cultural politics of Development -- with the capital D that aureoles the word for the real-estate/tourism/leisure-industry complex known as the "hospitality sector" -- in Australia between 1972 and 1988. These dates served as a rough guide to a periodisation made necessary by tourism's growing importance to the Australian economy and its effects in the social landscape; without historical boundaries, cultural criticism in a project such as mine does risk descriptive chronicling of apparently endless change. However, periodisation does not suffice to signify "history" in a disciplinary sense; I simply meant to set functional limits to my research.

1972 is a symbolic threshold year in modern Australian

history. The first Labor government since 1949 was elected in a climate of euphoric political radicalism and desire for social change, but also in the last year when it was easy to assume that economic prosperity was "natural" to Australia; with the mad boom of 1973 came increasingly open talk about post-War prosperity as a historical phase that could actually be said to be over. Sixteen years later, in 1988, another Labor government (elected in 1983 on a platform of pragmatism and a promise of social consensus) supervised the celebration of the Australian Bicentenary as a huge, touristic-historical spectacle which lasted all year and had considerable impact on major cities, especially Sydney.

During those sixteen years, it became a media commonplace that Australia is not a securely affluent "European" society on the edge of "Asia", but an odd, vulnerable hybrid, a "poor little rich country" (as the most dismal of popular economists, Maximilian Walsh, entitled his 1979 book on "the shock of the seventies");²⁹ something like a "Third World economy" dependent on natural resources and tourism, deeply indebted and with a structurally under-developed manufacturing sector, yet sustaining a spend-thrift society with First World expectations of living standards and an entrenched First World self-image. No longer a European outpost, Australia had become a peripheral country of the Pacific Rim, economically dominated by Japan. In the 1980s, then, government added a diffuse cultural pedagogy to its program of economic reform (outlined in Chapter Five): promoting tourism would be part of a wider process of "reconstructing Australia" in which white

Australians would learn to adjust our expectations -- and begin to rethink that self-image.³⁰

Within this historical framework of intensely conflictual change, I chose tourism as a focus for studying, in very small "contexts", how changes were worked through, on the one hand, by the everyday living of particular communities, and, on the other, in what Donald Horne calls "the public culture": the mixture of rituals, beliefs, customs, practices, and images of policy and pleasure created by all those institutions, great and small, state and private, sacred and secular, that sustain a "mirage that can float over a society, purporting to be its national life, serving some interests and suppressing the very existence of others."³¹ It is important that for Horne, a public culture is not always the same as "hegemony" understood as a negotiated common sense, and it is not always popular culture in the sense of being widely practised, enjoyed and shared; "sometimes", he insists, "a majority of the people in a society may not appear in a public culture at all, or may be presented in some way in which they don't recognise themselves" (vii).

I was interested in the reworking of public culture in Australia during this period, including many of those beliefs in whiteness, Britishness, homosociality, ordinariness, and egalitarianism (discussed in Chapter Four) that for a century had sustained the feeling of being "major" for Anglo-Celtic working class people. The federal government agenda for this reworking included a shift in national mythology from protectionist "working man's paradise" to free trade "tourist

heaven". However, the imagery of such a shift could not be "popularised" to the same degree or in the same way as that of the no less engineered policy shifts, in this period, from White to Multicultural Australia, and from Classless to Cosmopolitan society³² -- not least because so many immigrants imported as industrial labour after the Second World War found their cosmopolitanism useless to the tourist economy. A majority of Australians could not appear in a Pacific Rim tourist picture; or, to put the problem in a less unnegotiable way, the roles accorded most Australians could not be recognised as "major".³³

At the level of popular mythology, then, "the improbable enclosure of tourism within an apparently nationalist commercial project"³⁴ had a potential to interfere with the ideological work of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Tourism is just too blatantly sectoral in its economic appeal to assuage majority fears. As Jennifer Craik succinctly puts it, the industry favours "low skilled, part-time, casualised and underpaid ('feminised') employment", and selected coastal or desert locations.³⁵ Packaging tourism as nationally redemptive can create new needs for old social scapegoats: migrants taking the good jobs; women, taking bad jobs and undermining unionism; Aborigines taking land, taxpayers' money, and tourists away from the cities; Asians "taking over the country" as tourists and developers. Sensible cultural studies lessons on the virtues of well-managed tourism in, say, Bali,³⁶ do not really address such fears, which are powerful intimations that the "majority" mirage is fading.

Nevertheless, "touristification" proceeds, in slow time, as a cultural and economic process among others; in a widely-settled state such as New South Wales (where battles over wilderness are relatively rare and the housing supply for citizens is a major environmental problem), tourism is usually experienced less directly as a threat or a panacea than as a mundane reality negotiated daily in people's lives. So I set out to study representations of space, time and movement at work in and around tourist practices (shopping and driving as well as sight-seeing) as they were carried out by residents as well as visitors in particular places. I examined discourses involved in the material production of tourist places -- government reports, media stories, planning debates, promotional literature -- and circulating as gossip, myth and opinion between the users of a place. Since I understand "particularity" as a set of relations rather than an essence, I also wanted to analyse differences between specific tourist East Coast places: a motel in the small bush town of Tenterfield (Chapter One); three suburban shopping malls, two in Brisbane, one in the rural-industrial town of Maitland (Chapter Two); an urban tourist tower (Chapter Four). All of these sites of analysis were spaces of women's work; all were inhabited or invested in some way by working class communities; and most were involved in the process of remaking socio-economic regions as "tourist landscapes".

An early outcome of my preliminary research was an interest in the persistence of ideologies (that is, narratives and rhetorics) of Progress and Development in contemporary

Australia: how and where "progress" and "development" were being mobilised and disputed as values, by whom, what tasks they performed, what actions they enabled, and, since the two terms are distinct while able to function as synonyms, how they shifted in relation to each other, overlapping on some occasions, coming into conflict on others.³⁷ Progress and Development are grand narratives both, implicated as they are in modern histories, theories of history, and theories of theories of history that are hardly unique to Australia. However, they have had and, I soon discovered, still have (despite the incredulity which is, according to Lyotard, now the condition of any grand narrative's circulation)³⁸ an intensely practical resonance for local politics as well as national historiography. If Adorno is right to claim that "more than other concepts, progress vanishes upon specification of what is really meant by it, that is, what progresses and what does not",³⁹ then it is important to ask how progress is "specified" in actual social conflicts over its value.

The pursuit of competing versions of Progress, with Development as an instrument or opponent, has long been considered, by widely diverging interests, the driving force of the project of European settlement in Australia; early in the twentieth century, "the law of progress and the survival of the fittest"⁴⁰ was already at the core of justifications for White Australia and for Aboriginal dispossession. Bob Connell bluntly puts it this way:

Modern conservatism is different in a number of ways from the aristocratic and religious European conservatism of the nineteenth century. It is secular, optimistic, and ties its defence of private property to a doctrine of prosperity and progress. This is nowhere more clear than in those countries, like Australia, which were colonies of settlement in the nineteenth century. 'Progress' was almost the condition of their existence: killing off the blacks and filling up the country with whites and their buildings was the process with which local politics began.⁴¹

Published in 1977, Connell's account of conservatism needs refinement today. In Chapter Five, I argue that during the 1980s neo-liberal economics politically projected as "neo-conservatism" largely displaced that secular, optimistic doctrine of prosperity and progress with a mystical pessimism emphasising survival and management. However, Connell's stress on the shaping importance of Progress retains its analytical force. Today, when appeals to "progress" are as likely to arouse groans as applause in public debates about the meaning and purpose of a development, Progress can still be invoked as a foundational value, whether coded as a spirit to be recaptured or as a loss to lament but accept -- that is, as a myth of origins, if no longer of destiny.

Histories of race and racism, nation-building and nationalism, class conflict and labour relations, immigration,

and the struggles for population control waged over and through women's bodies, cannot easily be written here without reference to what Paul Gilroy calls, somewhat dismissively, "the mesmeric idea of history as progress".⁴² However, as I suggest in Chapter Two, even a cursory study reveals the tenacity of the idea's mesmerising power in social contexts where "History" in the disciplinary sense is not overtly at issue -- for example, debates about housing, health, community services, leisure facilities, the environment, new technology. At the same time, rhetorics of evolution, elevation, advancement, "upward mobility" and cohesively linear time have served with as much tenacity to articulate the aspirations of Australian radicals, reformers and dissenters as they have to validate and channel colonial power: as Donald Denoon reminds us, "settler historiography was not only Eurocentric but forward-looking. A golden age lay not in the past but in the near future".⁴³

So the voiding of Progress, in the 1980s, from neo-liberal narratives of Australia's future ("poor little rich country") was in itself a historic shift that brought no joy to progressive critics of "history as progress". It was one of the ways in which economic models of development were being sundered, at this time, from other, untimely elements of the concept's complex nineteenth century content -- social reform, human betterment, the struggle for justice, dreams of a more equitable distribution of property, income and resources. Indeed, despite its title, Max Walsh's Poor Little Rich Country (1979) was only partly a self-pitying fable of white

decline. More forcefully, it was an early move to popularise the rejection of ideas of social progress as too "costly" that would permeate the public culture of the 1980s.⁴⁴

As it turned out, my growing interest in these issues made it impossible to end my study with the Bicentenary (evidence, if any were needed, that I cannot claim to write as a historian) or to focus exclusively on cultural responses to tourism. As I have argued elsewhere,⁴⁵ the touristic and a-historical form of the mass media Bicentenary (the version that most Australians experienced in common) paradoxically fostered popular interest in "history" in every sense of that term. For all the activities targeted to a homogenised international tourist market, the Bicentenary celebrations pluralised, or rather multiplied, historical consciousness in Australian cultural life. It gave new legitimacy to critical accounts of the colonial past -- distributed by museums, TV shows, radio, films, pop songs, "alternative" festivals, personal memoirs and magazine stories as well as academic books -- and it gave credibility to sophisticated public attacks (most obviously, by Aborigines) on the idea of "history as progress". Dedicated to the power of positive thinking and conflict resolution -- as any state-sponsored commercial enterprise on such a scale must be -- the Bicentenary actively welcomed constructive feminist, migrant, working-class, local, family, and, above all, Aboriginal historical experiments with financially open arms, and endowed them with immense respectability. As a consequence of both these developments, it shaped a lively space of public

discussion about the meaning of a national history.⁴⁶

No doubt any multi-faceted national festival is likely to be experienced, close to the event, more powerfully as a beginning than as closure. Although I saw the Bicentenary as inflecting rather than initiating debates about the politics of development, because of its impact I came to see that the unity of my own project derived more from the tension between, on the one hand, the economic beliefs of the Hawke-Keating regime (shaped by the economic and political experiences of the 1970s, foregrounded as rhetoric as well as policy in the years leading up to the Bicentenary, then shrouded with something like shame during the recession which followed) and, on the other hand, the historical myths of the Labor Party -- myths of Labor as the party of social progress, creative nationalism and, indeed, of historical consciousness. Dusted down for the Bicentenary, these myths were powerfully renewed (in ways that I discuss in Chapter Six) by the Keating government in the early 1990s.

The figure of Paul Keating became central to my project; I could not finish this thesis while he was still in power. Widely represented as embodying belief in economic rationalism and internationalism during the 1980s, Keating "morphed" in 1990 into an emblem of history and nationalism. With the push to reinvigorate republicanism in 1992, and the battle for the Native Title Act in 1993, critical and revisionary accounts of Australian history that were admitted to the mainstream during the Bicentenary became, for four brief but important years, institutionally dominant accounts. They even crept into the

tourist industry: most obviously, through museums and the promotion of Aboriginal culture, but also through state support for an export image of Australia as an urbane, progressive, socially liberal (the gay tourist trade grew significantly in this period)⁴⁷ and multiculturalist heaven.

Given that the contradictions between this culturalist program and the economic realities of life for most rural and working-class Australians had been obvious for a decade before the "Keating era" began, it is not surprising that the era ended abruptly with the federal election of March 1996. For historians, it will be a long time before this period can seriously be evaluated. As a cultural critic, however, I am concerned with evaluating the role played by images and stories in the conflicts of the present: for me, the value of analysing both phases of the Keating mythos, "economics" (the 1980s) and "history" (the 1990s), is that it shows how profoundly so-called "local" and "everyday" issues of identity, community and cultural power, so acutely raised by the social pressures of a tourist economy, are shaped by and responsive to the "global" struggle over the future of the nation-state. This is the concern of the first four chapters of the thesis.

The last two chapters examine, from a feminist perspective, the national political terrain of this struggle. Like many a progressive experiment in "sensitive" and "sustainable" tourism, the Keating government attempted to fuse a politics of cultural nationalism with an economic policy of internationalism. I do not presume to say whether

this formula ("and" ... "and") succeeded or failed at its social balancing-act; even for a cultural critic it is too soon to tell, and the story of the nation-state form is far from over. I do say, however, what kinds of problems and opportunities arise for feminist intellectuals on the political terrain so defined, and what kinds of "cultural politics" such a balancing-act makes possible. That is the concern of my final chapter.

Unfortunately, the methodological dilemmas of criticism cannot neatly be contained by an act of periodisation. During the years that I spent puzzling over what my thesis was about, almost every place I was studying changed. All have renovated their identities at least once. Some have won and others have lost out in the "regional wars for jobs and dollars"⁴⁸ which have forced so many Australian towns to compete, often against the odds, to become what David Harvey calls "centres of consumption"⁴⁹. Here, I can only examine the changing of the place where my thesis originated, and which would seem to be, on the surface of things and from the outside in reality, a massive over-statement of an obdurate immutability.

Case study: Sydney Tower

Sydney Tower is a tourist-telecommunications monument in the centre of Sydney's Central Business District (CBD). It has the usual revolving restaurants and observation decks, and it rises out of a historic shopping centre called "Centrepoint". When Sydney Tower first opened in 1981, it was widely heralded

as inaugurating a CBD revival -- which did eventuate, though not only or even primarily because of the Tower -- and so it became a focus of public argument about its aesthetics and gossip about its function. In what turned out to be an inaugural gesture for my research, I wrote an essay about it in 1982.⁵⁰ While it may seem self-indulgent to discuss the problems with that essay -- including the parallelism I've just created between criticism and the Tower's history -- it is a way to summarise the problems that this history raises (including the problem of parallelism).

In 1981, I was trying to disengage my thinking from the French semiotic tradition in which I had been schooled, and so I did the obvious: I structured my reading of Sydney Tower around a point by point demonstration that it was not like the object constructed by Roland Barthes' essay, "The Eiffel Tower."⁵¹ This contrast was not quite as arbitrary as it looks, given the flagrant dissimilarities between the two structures. Long before Sydney Tower was built, it had been promoted in public media as well as in trade papers as "The Eiffel Tower of the Southern Hemisphere" ("only higher").

For a long time, The Eiffel Tower has been the model of models of "modernity" as an engineering feat; reference to it marks the history of the American skyscraper, "beating" the Eiffel Tower being the historic mission of the Chrysler Building, and thus of the cloning of American skylines around the world. What interested me was how this meta-cliché was deployed in Sydney in the 1970s. Differentiating the Paris and Sydney towers by way of a critique of my own model of models

at that time (an essay by Barthes) seemed a way of learning to write from Sydney in 1981 rather than Paris in the 1950s -- as well as of attending to the critique of Mythologies given by Barthes himself in his essay "Change the Object Itself".⁵² For I thought that by showing how my Sydney Tower differed from Barthes' Eiffel Tower, I could change the object (in his terms) "as it presents itself to speech" -- transforming the developers' serial object, "(Eiffel)-Sydney Tower", into a locally articulated event.

Looking back, this project seems to me not only formalist but insanely devious. It was also unsuccessful: I supplemented Barthes as my model of models with a mix of Foucault on surveillance,⁵³ Baudrillard on implosion,⁵⁴ and feminist film theory on voyeurism.⁵⁵ Certainly, I was mimicking a real convergence between local intellectual passions and the spatial stories circulating about the Tower. For years, Sydney Tower was an urban talking-point; for inner city residents, an inexhaustible source of gossip, rumour and anecdote. Looking at the long, opaque stem supporting its turret, many believed, and a colleague of mine at NSWIT (it was rumoured) taught as fact, that THEY -- the police, ASIO, the CIA ... -- had their offices in there, all the way up to the top, so they could watch everything we were doing (surveillance). As for implosion: the media repeatedly described Sydney Tower as attracting bodies and money from outer suburbia, even from "all over the world", to the city centre -- and then worried about the collapse of overloaded parking and circulation systems. The theme of voyeurism was developed in a ribald

rather than a paranoid mode: the great width of the bottom of the turret was considered to have the effect of creating a dress, with a resultant discourse on the ambiguity of the Tower's sex and on the excitement (which is real enough) of looking up it from below.

In producing a mirror exchange between theory and gossip, those of us "working on the Tower" had an intense if fuzzy experience of pertinence in that work. It was one of those times when there is a co-incidence between the concerns of theoretical work, the community-building activities of intellectuals, and terms more widely circulating in the public culture; this coinciding produces an effect that we easily call "relevance". At other times, when there seems to be no such effect, we too easily assume that the relationship between academic work and public argument is therefore one of irrelevance. I consider this problem in Chapter Six. Here, I want to review in more detail the representation of towers and tower-history to be found inside Sydney Tower in 1981.

The turret interior was vastly and self-reflexively decorated. Each of the two observation decks had a "gallery" of photographs running round above the rim, and each level had its own theme. The lower deck proclaimed the transformation of Sydney as a locale: old sepia photographs of corner shops, pioneer cottages and bullock-dray roads were played off against the sublimity and modernity of the urban Panorama outside. The upper deck was more formalist: it narrated a universal history of towers, look-outs, and associated tourist activities. The theme linking the two levels and incorporating

info-tech toys on both was the overthrow of one of the great clichés of post-War Australian historiography -- the "tyranny of distance".⁵⁶ Inside the Tower, electronic communications were invoked as enabling Australia's integration into the age of global simultaneity: no more time lag, no more isolation by vast space from the rest of the world and from each other.

This imagery proclaimed the fulfilment of a mission that the Tower's developers had set themselves in the rhetoric used for over twenty years to "get the Tower off the ground". Sydney Tower's raison d'être was to act as an annunciation of modernity. It would enable Sydney to "grow up" (as journalists and architects nearly always put it), and so become, in its new-found maturity, a "world city", "in the real meaning of the word"; it would integrate Sydney at last! (if a little late) into the modern age inaugurated long ago by that model of modern models, the Eiffel Tower.

As with all such annunciations and the linear temporality they entail, there could be nothing new about this. In fact, there seemed to be nothing new about Sydney Tower. It imitated a number of tourist-telecommunications towers worldwide (the London Post Office tower, Toronto's CN tower), and no sooner was it completed than architecture critics were complaining that it was "an old-fashioned building". In terms of a history of Australian annunciations of modernity, this very archaism constituted its instant classicism. As David Bromfield has argued with reference to Perth in the interwar period, "the modern" in Australia has only marginally been understood as entailing the future, youth, originality, innovation, rupture,

the unknown and so forth.⁵⁷ The modern is more commonly taken to be a known history, something which has already happened elsewhere and which is to be reproduced with a local content. With its dated thrust ethos and failed funk aesthetic, Sydney Tower's Eiffel aspirations placed it squarely in the great tradition of Australian "positive unoriginality".⁵⁸

At least, that is how it looks if you frame the problem in terms derived from aesthetic debate. I think there was something "really new", or at least inaugural, about Sydney Tower. With its self-reflexive celebration of tourism as a means of becoming-modern, the Tower was one of the first architectural declarations in Sydney of what Jacques de Weerdts calls a "vocation" for tourism, and the first big building to doubly interpellate Sydney residents as "citizen-tourists" -- citizens at one with foreign tourists in our gaze at our own city, but also the living objects of that self-same tourist gaze.⁵⁹ The turret offered photos of Sydney people, perhaps some of the very people visiting the Tower, waving at the camera from their/our nicely restored wrought iron balconies, wandering around their/"our" freshly repainted Chinatown, visiting their/our zoos and museums. Here began what has since become an explicit, sometimes state-funded discourse on the need to remodel local culture to meet the needs of a tourist economy: in Sydney's case, to improve our manners (learning to say to strangers, "have a nice day"); to reform our attitudes to labour (learning that service is a virtue, not a humiliating chore); to eradicate or mask the prejudices running through the old proletarian culture (learning that

racism and sexism are bad for business).⁶⁰

However, the most remarkable component in Sydney Tower's self-production involved an unmasked history of "race" to be found in the theatrettes on both levels of the turret. If you went from the lower to the upper level, their audio-visual displays formed a pop-Darwinist narrative about the Progress of the tower in "human" history, and the triumph of Sydney Tower as that history's ultimate outcome. In conformity with the photographs, the lower theatre's display was about Sydney as a tourist locale; it screened images of people pointing and waving from boats, streets and houses at objects which were not represented. All these images of pointing were in candid snapshot style, except the last. The last was a simulated "naive" image of a primal scene, the foundation of the city: natives on the foreshore pointing at a sailing ship in the Harbour, Europeans on board pointing back, and on the soundtrack these words -- "You can imagine their surprise when the first settlers sailed in to this magnificent Harbour". This was genesis: the first white gaze at Aborigines, first objects of tourism in a brave new land; "we" (this display gave no indication of addressing Koori tourists) imagine "their" surprise at the wonder of "us", while we gaze at "this" (not their) magnificent harbour.

Then on the upper level came "The Evolution of the Tower: From Tree House to Sydney Tower". The higher display began with a simulated naive painting of a creation story: caveman is attacked by animals and invents the treehouse; cavewoman, thus elevated, sees a volcano erupting in the distance; she

points, and, as if by spontaneous combustion, the language of tourism is born. Naive images then gave way to a postcard mode and a series of historical model towers (London, Pisa, Eiffel) "ascended" from the ancestral tree house until, in climatic bursts of repetition of a single identical image, the pure, final form of Sydney Tower was attained.

Walking in the sky in 1981, the impact of this narrative progression, and narrative of Progress, was strong. I was deeply shocked by these displays -- a rare experience for me in Family Entertainment space. I knew that story: as a child in the 1950s, I had learned it from newsreels at the cinema and from the pictures and the "historical" lessons in my school magazines that taught me the social Darwinism that for so long provided white Australia with a history to fix the boundaries of community and guarantee national identity. The displacement of this story was recent enough in 1981 for "The Evolution of the Tower" to be appalling in its bald restatement of a brutal truth about "Australian history". Over the next few years, the impact of Sydney Tower's displays would be intensified for me by the opening up of a discussion by Aboriginal people about their own negotiations of an ever-increasing tourist and art-market interest in their cultures and historical experiences -- or, more precisely, in some of them.⁶¹

For these reasons, Sydney Tower's autobiography seemed a useful place to begin studying the narratives and rhetorics of Progress in contemporary Australian culture. So you can imagine my surprise when I went back to the Tower one day in

1989, with a PhD in mind, and it was almost all gone.

Worse, it was as though none of the representations I had studied had ever been there. I asked questions about the renovations, but no-one working there had been around long enough to remember the décor of the Tower having ever been any different from the way it was that day. So this crazed cultural critic staggered around the turret, crying, "What have you done with the evidence?"

The lower deck had become a cafeteria, and its theatrette had vanished. The old photographs had been replaced by plastic bas-reliefs with a wildflower motif, in a rectangular design referring not to wildflowers but to plastic cafeteria trays. On the upper level, the "Evolution of the Tower" remained, but as a self-contained story with no anaphoric reference linking its "primitive" figures to Aboriginal people -- whose existence was now alluded to only by the toy boomerangs and didgeridoos in the souvenir shop. All the other images linking the Tower to Sydney's history had also disappeared. Instead of narrating the founding of place, the "gallery" represented international tourist time; it unambiguously offered visitors perfunctory ads for duty-free fur and opal shops, portraits of transport systems (trains, boats, hydrofoils, even a picture of charter bus drawn up next to a Qantas jet), and snapshots of their other destinations -- anonymous motel pools, distant tropical and rural resorts.

These images celebrated neither Sydney nor the Tower, but rather the possibility of going somewhere else. Instead of promoting itself a centralising metonym of the City, Sydney

Tower had become a narrative prelude offering a moment of "overview", not of space to be consumed but of an itinerary of movements about to be performed. As for Sydney residents, we were simply ignored by the Tower -- unless we too were going elsewhere and could qualify for duty-free fur and opal. At best, looking out at our city, we could overlook the programs of other people's pleasures and gain a vague pride of place therefrom.

I had quite failed to expect such drastic change. I had, of course, expected to rethink my frames of reference and reformulate problems accordingly. In the years since my first visit to the Tower, new accounts of Australian colonialism had appeared, rapidly entering the public culture and shattering the complacency with which I, like many other white feminists, had thought about history, place and "home".⁶² In 1989, I also knew that I was gazing out at a socio-economic "panorama" vastly different from the tranquil scene of 1981, when the city was still recovering from the great property market crashes of the mid-1970. Now, the view was of a frenzy of construction that was interfering with the dream it aspired to accommodate.⁶³ From the turret, high cranes vied with buildings for visual attention: on the ground, with the roar of jack-hammers pulverising your ears, walking in the city was appalling; whole guide books became dated overnight as buildings disappeared and city blocks mutated. I knew, too, that if Sydney's skyline is always a projection of class societies elsewhere,⁶⁴ the 1989 skyline was primarily being created by the emergent class systems of the Pacific Rim, not

those of the age of the Eiffel Tower.

All this knowledge, however, was of little practical assistance in deciding what to do with the discovery that my "founding" site of analysis had changed utterly, in almost embarrassing congruence with the socio-economic landscape.

Here I return to Grossberg's question: "what do you do when every event is ... changing too fast to allow the comfortable leisure of academic criticism?". It is important to ask, first of all, why this kind of change is a problem. After all, you can argue that such change itself should be the object of study, rather than an "event" construed as a "text", which is in turn construed as a symptom of a general condition of culture to be diagnosed by cultural critics. Studying change, rather than texts, objects or even practices in popular culture, is in part what Grossberg suggests we might do, and I would agree with his shift of emphasis.⁶⁵

However, studying change creates a specific problem for the analysis of places -- which tend to change at a rate which may be called geological in comparison with TV, music, or fashion, but which is drastic when it happens. This is the problem of description in the writing of a cultural study; a problem cognate in some ways with that of the plot summary in film criticism, and one also tied up with problems of exchange between local as well as national cultures in a not quite post-imperial world. Barthes, for example, could define the Eiffel Tower as "present to the entire world", a reasonable proposition (especially if one adds the restriction, "of likely readers of this book"), and this fiction of presence

and stability over time meant that he didn't have to describe it.

Writing of tourist-tower interiors in Sydney, or, even more acutely, of motels and shopping centres in towns that many Australians have never heard of, I cannot take either presence or durability for granted in quite the same way -- any more than critics of US cable TV can assume familiarity, even from other critics, with any but already canonical shows. In this sense, obscurity and proliferation create comparable problems. Faced with this need to describe, to create a referent, the most resolutely "textual" of cultural studies can drift, just like the "consumer activity" research so often taken to be its opposite, into practising a version of the ethnographic present -- that disciplined failure of reflexivity which can, as Eric Michaels notes, "be obscured but not changed by writing about it".⁶⁶ In describing, we monumentalise and often also render timeless the "places" we discuss. Then when they change, as they almost always do, an apocalyptic erasure of a world appears to have occurred.

What interests me most about the problem of description is not the epistemological or metaphysical issues it can be made to raise, but the technical, rhetorical issue of the enunciative strategies (and thus the strategies of reference) involved in producing particular descriptions -- and the disciplinary problems these strategies can create. If I am honest about it, the thing that annoyed me most about the inner transformation of Sydney Tower was the tense change it imposed on my original account. Taking away the rhetorical

security of my "mythographic" present, this involved me in a real shift of register from "discourse" to "history" (in Benveniste's rather than Steedman's sense of those terms)⁶⁷, and thus in a quite different relationship to my material. I found myself writing a fuzzy sort of historical narrative -- and this threatened to render suspect the legitimacy of my research. Despite the encroachments of Economics, History is still the most privileged discourse of liberal intellectual authority in Australia, and I have no historical training. Moreover, the "past" of Sydney Tower is not easily passed off as a hitherto suppressed dimension of national experience whose importance might justify a resort to personal narrative. Why should the past of Sydney Tower matter at all, except as an "investment" of a researcher's time and energy?⁶⁸

A brief review of relevant literature

Cultural studies offers a number of ways of circumventing a close encounter with this problem.

I could paraphrase various certified general accounts of the culture of late capitalism -- such as Jean Baudrillard's theory of "hyperreality"⁶⁹ or Fredric Jameson's account of postmodernism as entailing a loss of depth and a death of "real" history⁷⁰ -- and then read the renovation of Sydney Tower allegorically as a local variation on these. This would be an Australian "modernist" solution. It would also take me away from cultural studies (analysis of contexts) and back to theory (those "great schematic and secondary sweeps through

time").

I could follow John Fiske and find something empowering in the developments I've described.⁷¹ This has in fact been done with Sydney's Darling Harbour (a newer citizen-tourist development) and the related monorail that runs through the city. In the controversy over the monorail's construction, some cultural critics argued that its opponents had a morbid Frankfurt School hostility to popular culture, and that the issue of pleasure and user-transformation of the monorail experience could be separated from the debate about why the Labor government that was funding the monorail under direct pressure from the Darling Harbour developer, Transfield-Kumagai, was also responsible for public hospitals, in working class suburbs, with walls patched together with chicken wire.⁷² This solution maintains intellectual equanimity about materially changing objects by ignoring difference and eventfulness: in Fiske's work, the ethnographic present extracts the same moral ("life is complex and contradictory, and some good comes of everything") from endlessly diverse situations and, since that moral remains independent of its vehicles, it precedes, survives and can always redeem any actual event.

Or, I could reiterate from my old analysis the notion of implosion, taking the now disinvested Tower as an emblem of the post-panoptic collapse of meaning and distinction into the "dead centre" of the urban core that Robert Somol discovers in his analysis of the "singularity of power" in Chicago's State of Illinois Centre (an "urban ruin" which would be, in a story

of the Progress of simulation, much more advanced than the jaunty verticality of Sydney Tower).⁷³ In this way, I could announce the end of social progress and the birth of a dystopian age of "style" -- joining Somol in confirming both the futility of activism and the death of the critical spirit that haunts the work of Jameson. This solution takes me back to aesthetics (and to the utilitarian political philosophy developed by the pre-postmodern Sydney Libertarians forty years ago).

I think that all of these possibilities, whatever their separate attractions and disadvantages, share a common flaw. Each is a way of reading a singular site as if it were an allegorical exposition of theoretical problems taken as given, and thus an illustration of general forces already known to be at work in the world. My problem is not with "general forces" (talking about tourism, that would be absurd) but with "illustration". Often doing duty as description, this sort of exposition creates a complicity between the aesthetic problematic of the exemplary object, the singular site, "the" text, and what remains, despite rhetorical appearances, a linear model of historical time in which the "inevitable" -- whether it be the spatial fix of late capitalism, the moral imperative to find empowerment, or the apotheosis of simulation -- is realized in a time which is not that of urban development, the popular, or even "late" capitalism, but rather that of the enunciating subject of the discourse in which this complicity is produced. In other words: the grand narrative of "history as progress" is restored and

miniaturised, in these accounts, by little parables of "theory as progress".⁷⁴

For example, Somol's witty conclusion that we must "abandon the language of struggle", because "in quicksand, movement only tends to swallow one faster", depends for its effect on a prior claim that the "world" has largely "moved beyond" the techniques of power that once made activism effective:

Foucault's project may well have made sense ... a generation ago, but we are on the side of urban fall-in. Similarly, from our reversed perspective, the currently "progressive" architects and planners who continue to move away from forty-five are unintelligible to those of us on the down side of sixty-eight. Their nova is our black hole. We remember things in their future, although to them we have yet to be born. (115)

In this formulation, as in most of Baudrillard's work, it is in the present tense of the rhetorical subject, "we", that a progressive subject of linear, albeit dystopian, Development is blatantly reconstituted -- along with a vanguard, albeit cynical, model of intellectual practice. This "time" belongs to the mundane temporality of a market in cultural attitudes and ideas, and its relevance (which is perfectly real) is not to the past or future of urban struggles but to the jostling for position and credibility that is "business as usual" for

that market.

However, it is not much use to assert this if one does so moralistically to reiterate as doctrine (from an imaginary position transcending the "market") the concepts of unequal development and differential temporality.⁷⁵ For practical purposes it is important to ask anew, for each case study or context, why a model of evenly unfolding temporality ("progress") presents a problem for a particular project. My problem, this time, is that I began my research by asking questions about the social and cultural uses of contemporary versions of history as Progress -- only to find myself retrieving the "theory" that I had before the questions.

So one thing I can do in response to changing objects is refuse to be "sucked in" (in Somol's phrase) by "singularity" in events or sites. This is one reason for studying several places in a tourist economy, constructing a context of relationships, differences and relative rates of change. For example, if Sydney Tower no longer addresses city residents, other developments do: to ignore this by narrating the Tower's changes in apocalyptic form concedes too much to the property developers' proclivity for declaring each monument to capital an "epochal" statement. It follows that an analysis of Sydney Tower's changes would not necessarily be an adequate prelude to going further afield -- as an ethnographer or sociologist usefully might -- in order to ask why "Green Hills" shopping mall mutated, around the same time, from an outdoor village square to a history-effect enclosure called "The Hunter"; or why, 500 miles north, the history-effect enclosure of Henry

Parkes Motel should have vanished in an explosion of High Funk Hot Pink paint; and what these aesthetic changes mean for people inhabiting and visiting these places, as well as in the regional economies giving places and communities shape.

History and the popular

As my emphasis on "aesthetic" change may suggest, this thesis is not an ethnography any more than it claims to be history. My questions and research methods derive from the disciplines of so-called "textual" criticism⁷⁶ rather than social science, and from rhetoric rather philosophy. Obviously, I borrow from other disciplines. However, when I offer a historical account of the production of an object at a given time, or touch on "ethnographic" questions of usage, I do so for purposes defined by my critical project; such borrowings give me different kinds of evidence for questioning specifically aesthetic propositions (such as those of Jameson and Baudrillard) about the historical and social effects of particular cultural practices.

In the process, I am dealing with two immensely polysemic terms: "history" and "popular culture". Theses could be written on each of these three words, so I should declare the limits of my interest in the issues that they raise. First, I freely admit that I use these terms in several senses and do not stop to define my use of them every time. I never address the question "what is culture?" (a defining question of cultural theory). Nor do I consider the history of the concept

of "culture" (with Raymond Williams' work, a founding question of cultural studies)⁷⁷, although I do take issue, briefly in Chapter Three, with Ian Hunter's reading of that history.⁷⁸ I have a more flexible relationship with the questions "what is history" and "what is the popular?" to the extent that I often ask what is meant in particular contexts by "history" and the "popular". This is why I use these terms myself in varying ways. I take meaning to be a discursive rather than a linguistic phenomenon, and a matter of social negotiation rather than semantic definition; when I analyse meaning, I do so in terms of the force and form of particular mixed practices (in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "regimes of signs")⁷⁹ that I take to be always collective ("general") and situated ("particular") in ways that my task as a critic is to specify. In other words, my approach to analysis is pragmatic and my method of analysis rhetorical.⁸⁰

That said, I can better define the distinctive emphases of this thesis. However influenced my work has been by Foucault, I do not presume to offer here a "history of the present"; my concern is rather with struggles over the meaning and value of history in the present, where "the present" is assumed to have temporal depth: I write about Australia after Whitlam. In a very small set of sites (innumerable others might have been chosen), I examine what people say and do in the name of history. This includes, obviously, telling stories and circulating images of the past, but it also includes developing promotional strategies for commercial as well as community-building purposes; it involves romantic or nostalgic

quests for personal and social identity as well as a rigorous search for truth; it entails the process that Noel Pearson calls "the creation, maintenance and deconstruction of popular belief".⁸¹ However, the sense of history that I as a critic most frequently bring to bear on my materials is one specific to the study of forms of practice; I emphasise the historicity of genres, narratives, clichés, vernacular turns of phrase, and in Chapters Three and Four I defend the importance for cultural studies of respecting the material distinctness of this level of analysis.⁸²

I approach popularity in a similar way. While I never equate the popular with folklore, with mass culture, with the media, with "the majority", with vast numbers of consumers, with the demos or with the opposite of "art", all these uses of the term are retraced and reworked in mine; this is simply to say that my discourse, too, is enabled by a history of scholarship and debate. While I understand that the popular can also be described as an empty category, and that one useful way of doing cultural studies is to examine how it works for particular practices of "distinction" (in Pierre Bourdieu's phrase)⁸³, that is not my purpose here.⁸⁴ What I do consistently emphasise is the dynamic, uneasy relation between public culture in Horne's sense⁸⁵, particularly media, governmental and corporate "images of policy" (a term I discuss in Chapter Three), and the popular in Michel de Certeau's sense of an "art of timing" -- a way of doing things, rather than a space or zone of culture.⁸⁶

This model of the popular has its drawbacks, and I

discuss some of these in Chapter Four. However, it has the advantage of enabling me to distinguish the media-saturated, institutionally sustained and strategic production of "public" discourse on Australian "culture" and "history" from the actual practices, whether everyday (shopping at Green Hills) or extraordinary (climbing Sydney Tower), that serve as materials of and for the public elaboration of national life, and that may in turn respond to, appropriate or contest the ways in which their public image is constructed. It follows that the public/popular distinction does not entail an opposition between the official and the vernacular or the academy and the street; "public" (institutional/strategic) and "popular" (practical/tactical) are asymmetrical categories. I am interested in the varying forms, modalities and degrees of involvement between public culture and popular practices in my period of study, and I take genres, narrative forms and rhetorical traditions to be material, and historically persistent as well as productive, modes of such involvement.

Here, too, I insist on the methodological importance of recognising different temporalities. Like political debates between competing interest groups on television (examined in Chapter Six), theoretical debates in cultural studies have their own speeds and rates of change. Sometimes they move very fast, much faster than other lines of thinking in a society; "keeping up" with the rate of change in our discipline can lead us to ignore the way that a rhetoric or a problematic deemed "dead", "dated" in one context can be powerfully alive in another. "Progress" is an obvious case. My view of my

social "place" as an intellectual is that I need to think academically not only from a position (which I certainly occupy) at the end of centuries of argument about theories of theories of history, but also from those moments of "timing" in which people in the path of developments say: "it's sad, but you can't stop progress".

Involvement: desire for history

This raises the question of my own involvement in this research. Following an old, much disputed feminist principle, I confine myself here to tourist landscapes, local histories and cultural traditions of which I have extensive personal experience; the "Australian popular culture" that I discuss is primarily white, Anglo-Celtic, heterosexual and working class or petty-bourgeois. However, I do this in a spirit of recognising, and articulating in a professional practice, the otherness in this culture. I do not express it; I study it.

My commitment to this procedure is to some degree political. I tend to agree with Slavoj Zizek that the "blind spot" of white liberal intellectuals in the West is to recoil in horror from the "proto-fascist populism" ("redneck" or "ocker populism" might be appropriate Australian equivalents) of their own traditional cultures, while saluting the culture of other ethnic communities; and I suspect he is right to suggest that in doing so we participate in fostering a hatred of "one's own" pleasure on which the persecution of others may depend.⁸⁷ I am certain that in cultural studies it is crucial

to confront the anxieties and fears pervading those self-identified "majority" cultures that are now so profoundly threatened by social and economic change.

By doing so, those of us who grew up in such cultures can perhaps restore some intellectual and political force to the insistence that the popular is complex and contradictory. Take tourism, for example. My brief history of Sydney Tower might be taken simply to confirm many people's worst nightmare of what international mass tourism can mean for cultural difference, with its abrupt abolition of all the mediating signs of locality and history. Yet the fate of "The Evolution of the Tower" also suggests the ambiguity of a moment in which a society which has produced its own identity historically by dispossessing others now finds itself subject in turn to fears -- and fantasies -- of displacement.

In such a context, there can be no simple answer to Carolyn Steedman's question, "why does cultural studies want history?". Wanting history can mean many things, some of them defensive; we may want "history" as a form of reassurance that things will turn out as badly as we fear they might (and in Chapter Six I discuss some responses to republicanism that have taken this form). My impulse is rather the opposite: I tend to want history as a source of a liberating certainty that anything could happen. Alongside the history of Sydney Tower, consider the changes wrought in part by tourism to the grand old narrative of national identity in Australian literature and cinema over the past thirty years.

For most of this century, the "quest for national

identity" has been a theme of Australian historiography.⁸⁸ This quest was commonly narrated, by Anglo-Celtic men, as a story of nascent, singular subjectivity which usually ended in more or less transcendent failure for the white male hero -- most famously today, in Patrick White's Voss (1957). As Ross Gibson and Kay Schaffer have shown in detail, powerfully ambivalent relationships were constructed in precisely this way between the land, femininity and Aboriginality⁸⁹. However, from the 1950s to the 1970s, as increasingly accessible air travel made it easier for more Australians to leave the continent, an "identity" problem was more often posed in popular culture by tales of the alienated Australian tourist abroad (for example, Bruce Beresford's 1972 film The Adventures of Barry McKenzie), rather than the European explorer lost in Australia.

"The Australian" in these tales was often a Candide figure -- bumbling and naive or obnoxious and insecure -- and thus an agent of a satire directed more at Australians than at others encountered en route. However, as this new tradition began to flourish people did not, and have not, stopped writing the history of colonial exploration.⁹⁰ Alongside the model of identity as the object of a quest, another developed in which majoritarian Australian identity was a target of often savage (and, of course, not necessarily progressive) cultural criticism: think of Murray Bail's merciless novel Homesickness (1980) about suburban Australians on a package tour in Europe, or the Redgum song which pillories the "home" culture of the Ugly Australian tourist ("Been there, done

that, I've been to Bali too").

Still another model emerged in the 1980s as Australia became more popular as an international tourist destination, and as conflicts emerged between the demands of international as opposed to domestic tourism, and as debates began to erupt about what images of "Australian identity" might suit the former rather than the latter. Culture began to be debated as a potential tourist object: once this happens, "identity" is no longer defined romantically as a goal to be achieved but as a commodity to be produced, an image to be promoted. Crocodile Dundee (1986) was in a manifesto for this moment (and the film itself was an allegory of the "export" logic of tourist policy).⁹¹ More recently, the picaresque tradition of self-discovery through travel was given a new cinematic twist by Stephan Elliott's Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1994). As the drag queens learn about themselves by meeting exotic others in the foreign country beyond Darlinghurst, they do so thanks to the tourist economy that circulates people and money between Alice Springs and Sydney; like Crocodile Dundee, they are guest-workers in the "hospitality sector", rather than tourists abroad.

Of course, these cheery, survivalist comedies of cultural diversity and white "native cunning" tell us little about the negative social and environmental impact of tourism.⁹² As the representation of Australia to Australians as an international tourist destination reached a peak of intensity in Sydney during the Bicentennial celebrations, some of the implications of the shift from "tourist" to "toured" became obvious in the

public sphere of the street: thousands of poor, aged, and invalid people were evicted from low-income housing in the inner city to make way for hotels and other luxury accommodation, and this helped further to erode the traditional Australian ideal of home ownership for (almost) everyone. Yet at the same time, the Federal government was forced into initiating some hasty symbolic measures to compensate for its years of broken promises towards Aboriginal people, for fear that the presence of prying television crews, as well as tourist cameras, from other countries could make Australia "look bad" for its treatment of indigenous people.

For government and "public" culture today, the implications of the media's power to arouse and proliferate wishes, fears and fantasies about what the gaze of the Other might see are enormous; survivalist comedies draw their energy and their sense of timing from this. Today, economically motivated cultural "restructuring" involves not only an active process of revising and contesting inherited accounts of the past, but also circulating new polemical images of what might count as desirable future for a society being "touristified". This, too, can be understood as a desire and a demand for history.

This is why the example of Sydney Tower is in my view most usefully read not as a metonym of a general "problem" of international tourism, but as a way of framing another story of history and tourism which cannot be, I believe, quite so easily diagnosed by resorting to "mythical, apocalyptic or theoretical" notions of historic change.

Conclusion: "Where are we now"

Ngukurr: Weya Wi Na ("Ngukurr: Where Are We Now") is a videotape that was produced in 1988 as a program for broadcast on Aboriginal television in Central Australia.⁹³ Made by several members of the multi-lingual Ngukurr community in the Northern Territory, the tape constructs a history of that community as it developed after white settlers, missionaries and teachers arrived in the North. This history is narrated as an argument for a syncretic cultural politics to sustain that community's autonomy in the present and the future.

The theme of cultural syncretism is established at the beginning when an old man scolds the young people from the school verandah for playing "too much rap, disco. Rap -- that's whitefella music". Without undermining his insistence that the young people should learn their own dances, the film itself suggests that no cultural form is intrinsically "whitefella" property; it is aesthetically eclectic, mixing several genres and internationally familiar visual and musical styles with Aboriginal traditional elements. In this way, it acts as a complex and visually beautiful argument in favour of a practice of self-determination that would enable Aborigines to appropriate on their own terms technical knowledges and cultural goods from other societies, thus further securing their independence from both welfare bureaucracy and assimilationist cultural and political pressures.

One segment of Ngukurr: Weya Wi Na is of particular interest here. As part of the history of shared achievement,

the film documents community discussions about developing a language policy for the school. The adults want the children to learn English while keeping their own languages and culture, and they decide to take a field trip to research the possibilities. They choose to visit Singapore as a multilingual society where English is used in schools while other languages are spoken at home and in social life, and they are also interested in the experience of the Portuguese-speaking minority in Malacca.

The following segment documents a tourist expedition, one in which there is more mutuality to cultural exchange than most tours require or even permit. In a long scene at a Chinese school, the children sing in English for their Australian visitors; in return, the tourists perform Aboriginal music for their hosts and teach local children how to dance. There are many conversational scenes at the airport, the zoo, the streets and the markets (where the discovery that black Australians exist is represented as educational for Singaporeans of many races), and on a trip to Malacca Aboriginal and Portuguese-Malaysian women exchange experiences. The whole trip -- an act of "cultural tourism" with precise, pragmatic aims -- is considered very successful, and its story is incorporated into a lesson at school back home at Ngukurr.

As a white urban viewer watching this tape (and as one for whom the white as well as the black communities of the Northern Territory inhabit a distant space that I have only ever imagined visiting precisely as a tourist),⁹⁴ Ngukurr:

Weya Wi Na challenged my thinking about tourism and history in three fundamental ways.

What was most disconcerting to me was not seeing tourism represented as an encounter between Aboriginal and Asian societies unmediated by significant European agents, but rather the irrelevance of my own concept of "Australia" to the cultural and historical map constructed by the film. White Australia figures in the film only as history, a sign of the past (for example, archival footage of the missionary school that preceded the community school of today), and as a technological membrane -- represented by a Qantas jet -- through which Aboriginal people can pass to elsewhere in the present. An explicit link between these figures is provided by the older man's comment, heard in voice-over as the group boards the plane to Singapore, that he has always wanted to travel overseas but was refused a passport in 1966.⁹⁵

In short, both the international tourist industry and the Australian nation-state function as enabling mechanisms for a social practice defined without reference to the "othering" force of contemporary white Australia. What ensues is an "and ... and", not an "either ... or", way of operating. While Singapore and Malacca certainly figure in the film as different from Ngukurr (though not especially different from each other), this difference is conceptualised as a basis for constructing limited and thus non-specular similarities (such as multi-lingualism) through a practical cross-border exchange, from which the Ngukurr people can derive their own syncretic use value.

The second challenge follows from this. For years, Aboriginal culture has been debated as an object of tourism. Aboriginal intellectuals, bureaucrats and community leaders have participated in this debate, and it has long included arguments that "manufacturing traditions for tourism" (in Wai-Teng Leong's phrase)⁹⁶ can be a useful and acceptable activity, increasing the prestige of Aboriginal culture in the wider Australian society, and generating income that could secure economic independence from the state. "Traditional" culture, it is often said, is not a remainder of a pristine cultural source, but itself already a historically hybridised product. It follows that the maintenance of tradition can best be ensured by transforming culture by appropriating elements from other societies.

As I have suggested, Ngukurr: Weya Wi Na, as I see it, endorses this sort of strategy. However, it is not about Aboriginal culture as a tourist object. It positions Aboriginal people as subjects of a tourist practice, as well as of a history, a pedagogy and an economy. So it goes well beyond asking how the "manufacturing" of tradition may change the ways in which culture is henceforth to be lived; this process has been a part, even a pre-condition, of Ngukurr's history. Rather, it asks how the processes of change can be planned and managed in future by the people whom change will affect. In this way it leaves aside the critique of Australian historiography as a white male narrative of becoming, in order to tell a quite different story -- one in which a discrete tourist narrative is incorporated into an ongoing Aboriginal

history of survival, struggle, and self-determination.

The third challenge which I see in Ngukurr: Weya Wi Na concerns the doubts I have about my formulation of the first two. It is easy enough to take the next step and declare, in a orthodox cultural studies move, that this tape represents an exemplary instance of how new possibilities are opened up for an oppressed and marginalised group of people under conditions provided by tourism; my conclusion could then be, once again, that culture is complex and contradictory.

No doubt that must always be said. Nevertheless, I think that such a reading of Ngukurr: Weya Wi Na would simply represent an impacted version of my own "desire for history", uncritically projecting on to Aborigines (and "solving" in the telling of my story about their story) my own anxieties about Australia's past, present and future. If it is tempting for white Australians now to idealise Aboriginal ways of life at a safe distance from their struggles, it is also too easy to look selectively at selected symbolic success stories and then to appropriate these as so many reassuring promises of a generalised survival of cultural difference in a global tourist economy.

Carolyn Steedman might well call this use of history an "act of transference", although it isn't a new one: Aboriginal culture has often been invested by white Australians (among others) with a superior knowledge and wisdom that could help the rest of us solve our problems. However, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with transference: in academic work, it is unavoidable. Steedman's point is that we need to think about

what we are doing, when we do it, and why.

So my last response to her question, "why does cultural studies want history ... what good is it all to you anyway?" is to point out that the stories of Sydney Tower and Ngukurr, and the historiographies of "The Evolution of the Tower" and Ngukurr Weya Wi, are not disconnected from each other -- the history of tourism, like the image of the Qantas jet, links them in more ways than one. This is to reply to Steedman with the question posed to history by the Ngukurr community: "where are we now?" There is a level at which it matters that the designers of Sydney Tower's audio-visuals and the filmmakers from Ngukurr inhabit the same continent, may encounter some of the same political structures and institutions, and share the same time, however different their experience of temporality and how great the incommensurability between their ways of being and living: both exist and act in Australia in present time.⁹⁷ Cultural studies is a practice that requires us to try to understand the present context of their co-existence, as well as the specificity of each, and to construct future contexts in which the terms of their co-existence might be different. History, I think, is good for doing that, not least because history is the name that Australian public and, sometimes, popular culture gives this process at present.

Notes

1. Steedman, Carolyn. "Culture, Cultural Studies, and the Historians", Cultural Studies ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 621. Further references in parentheses in the text.

2. This phrase is associated with the work of Michel Foucault; on the issues that it raises, see Foucault and the Writing of History ed. Jan Goldstein (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), and Ann Curthoys and John Docker, "Is History Fiction?" The UTS Review 2.1 (1996), 12-37.

3. Lawrence Grossberg, "The Formations of Cultural Studies: An American in Birmingham", Strategies 2 (1989), 144.

4. Henri Lefebvre, Critique de la vie quotidienne, I: Introduction (Paris: Grasset, 1947), followed by Critique de la vie quotidienne, II: Fondement d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté (Paris: L'Arche, 1962).

5. Henri Lefebvre, Everyday Life in the Modern World trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), 40. This book was first published as La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne (Paris: Gallimard, 1968).

6. Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

7. David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). Harvey's title alludes to the definition of postmodernism as an epistemological condition in Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

8. On the "post-historical", see Elizabeth Deeds Ermath, Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), and Lutz Niethammer, Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End? trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1992). An influential "popular" theory of post-history is Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992).

9. O. K. Werckmeister, Citadel Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 183.

10. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 81.

11. Carl Schorske, "History and the study of culture", New Literary History 21:2 (1990), 407-20, cited by Steedman, 620.

12. Humphrey McQueen, "The pineapple of professional correctness", ABC Radio 24 Hours June 1996, 57. McQueen suggests that a professional "shying away" from the present by historians has left cultural theorists and literary critics "more alone in that territory" than we should have been.

13. I have in mind the consistency with which newspaper columnists who are not historians (such as Frank Devine, Gerard Henderson and P.P McGuinness) regularly pass judgment on the historical value of films, books and TV shows, and debate the history curriculum in schools; the frequent reflection in the media on prime ministerial performances for their future "historical" value; and the degree to which the controversy over "political correctness" in Australia in recent years has waged been most intensely for control of the language of history -- "invasion" versus "settlement" to describe the arrival of the British in Australia, for example -- rather than, as in the US, the literary canon.

14. Marc Augé, Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), 25. A widely cited and even more polemical account of the failings of the category of "time" from a geographer's point of view is Edward W. Soja, Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (London and New York: Verso, 1989).

15. This is the theme of a great deal of broadly post-colonial scholarship. However, I am thinking here of Tony Swain's historical account of the impact of Western "time" on the space-based ontologies of Aboriginal Australia: A Place for Strangers: Towards a history of Australian Aboriginal Being (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Thanks to Stephen Muecke for introducing me to this book.

16. Steedman follows Dominick LaCapra in conflating the concept of culture with the "culture-concept", thus assuming that commonality and coherence are always held to characterise a "culture", which is thereby made co-extensive with the history of the European nation-state; in cultural studies, I would argue, this conflation does not hold. See Steedman, 617, and Dominick LaCapra, History and Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).

17. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Trafficking in History and Theory: Subaltern Studies", Beyond the Disciplines: The New Humanities ed. K.K. Ruthven (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1993) 101-8. Future references in parentheses in the text.

18. Stephen Muecke, "Experimental history? The 'Space' of History in Recent Histories of Kimberley Colonialism", The UTS Review 2:1 (1996), 4.

19. Chakrabarty gives a concrete example of this. In his account of doing history in India, the material problems that Steedman finds inimical in Britain today (not least, access to archives) routinely faced the Subaltern Studies historians; like history itself, these were partly a legacy of British imperialism in India. As Indian historians, they were also confined to parochialism when they tried to practice "English cultural canons of history-writing" (103); a proper factuality did not suffice to make Indian case studies interesting to a broader academic world. However, their "parochial" responses to the first set of problems -- rethinking sources, archives, canons of objectivity, and cultural codes of access to information -- directly modified the second. The engagement with theory that followed (a critique of history, nationalism, citizenship and European philosophies of modernity), became "interesting" in Western academies: within ten years the project of Subaltern Studies was, Chakrabarty says wryly, "globalised"; "Trafficking in History and Theory", 101.

20. Serious attempts by practitioners to theorise the specificity of cultural studies have been relatively rare, in part because of a corporate coyness about staking claims to disciplinarity. Two exceptions to this are Tony Bennett, who wants to reduce cultural studies to "cultural policy studies", and Lawrence Grossberg, who follows Stuart Hall in defining cultural studies as a particular kind of practice: see, for example, Tony Bennett, "'Putting Policy into Cultural Studies'", Cultural Studies ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 23-37; Lawrence Grossberg, We gotta get out of this place: popular conservatism and postmodern culture (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies", Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler, 277-94. On Hall's own practice as a model for cultural studies, see Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

21. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds, Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 17.

22. Lawrence Grossberg, "Cultural Studies: What's In A Name?", B. Aubrey Fisher Memorial Lecture, October 1993, published by the Department of Communication, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, 9. I discuss Grossberg's argument in detail in "A Question of Cultural Studies", The Humanities and a Creative Nation: Jubilee Essays ed. Deryck M. Schreuder (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1995), 137-159.

23. I have also left aside a fascinating ethnographic literature on culture and history; see, for example, James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). A brief account of relations between cultural studies and the construction of culture in other disciplines is given in John Frow and Meaghan Morris, eds, Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader (Sydney and Urbana: Allen & Unwin and University of Illinois Press, 1993), vii-xxxii.

24. Among those most influential in cultural studies, see Michel De Certeau, The Writing of History trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); LaCapra, History and Criticism; and Hayden White, Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); on the relationship between this literature and cultural studies, see Curthoys and Docker, "Is History Fiction?".

25. For example, Gertrude Himmelfarb, On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), and Keith Windschuttle, The Killing of History (Sydney: Macleay Press, 1994).

26. For example, Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) and, more obliquely but tellingly for an Australian context, Stuart Macintyre, A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making Of Australian History (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994). Much feminist work on historiography is a critique of the historical profession; for a feminist defence of many of its protocols, see Carolyn Steedman, Past Tenses: Essays on writing, autobiography and history (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992).

27. Something like an orthodoxy on this topic is set out in Robert Young, White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West (London: Routledge, 1990).

28. See my "Panorama: The Live, The Dead and the Living" in Island in the Stream: myths of place in Australian culture ed. Paul Foss (Sydney: Pluto, 1988), 160-87.

29. Maximilian Walsh, Poor Little Rich Country: The Path to the Eighties (Harmondsworth and Ringwood: Penguin, 1979).

30. "Reconstruction" was a governmental as well as academic buzzword in this period; see, for example, the influential Australian Council of Trade Unions report, Australia Reconstructed: ACTU/TDC Mission to Western Europe (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), which, as Graeme Maddox points out, "drew attention to the close relationship in Scandinavia, Australia and West Germany between educational institutions and the labour market" and therefore "placed special emphasis on the need to improve

[Australian] skills in communications, numeracy, technology and business management"; The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition (Ringwood: Penguin Australia, 1989), 127.

31. Donald Horne, The Public Culture: An Argument with the Future (London and Boulder: Pluto Press, 1994), vii.

32. I am not suggesting that these shifts were uniformly effective or even socially real. On the complicated politics of these policy images, see Ghassan Hage, "Anglo-Celtics Today: Cosmo-Multiculturalism and the Phase of the Fading Phallus", Communal/Plural 4 (1994), 41-77.

33. Let me be clear about my attitude to tourism here. Of course, as so much Cultural Studies would insist, working class people enjoy being tourists. I have no quarrel with Horne's claim that tourism is "a secular pilgrimage to certain objects, people and places that contain within them the prospect of regeneration": The Public Culture, 56; see also The Great Museum: The Re-Presentation of History (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), and The Intelligent Tourist (McMahon's Point: Margaret Gee Publishing, 1993). I admit that in Australia's relatively benign conditions, most people can benefit in directly practical ways from the improved services and consumption opportunities that tourism fosters as well as provides. The question, however, is not whether the tourist industry is "good" or "bad", but how it works in particular situations. For an exemplary analysis along these lines, see Andrew Ross, The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life: Nature's Debt to Society (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 21-98.

34. Graeme Turner, Making It National: Nationalism and Australian popular culture (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 111.

35. Jennifer Craik, Resorting to Tourism: Cultural Policies for Tourist Development in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 231.

36. Horne, The Intelligent Tourist, 325-33. See also Michel Picard's excellent discussion of this model in "Cultural Heritage and Tourist Capital: Cultural Tourism in Bali", International Tourism: Identity and Change ed. Marie-Françoise Lanfant, John B. Allcock and Edward M. Bruner (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage, 1995), 44-66.

37. For ways of interpreting these extraordinarily complex concepts, see J. P Bury, The Idea of Progress: An inquiry into its origin and growth (New York: MacMillan, 1932) and Yi-Fu Tuan, Morality and Imagination: Paradoxes of Progress (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

38. Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, xxiv. Often represented as claiming that grand narratives are "dead", Lyotard argues (on the contrary) that what characterises their liveliness today is the difficulty we have in believing them.

39. Theodor W. Adorno, "Progress", The Philosophical Forum XV.1-2 (1984-4), 55.

40. W.E.H Stanner's scathing summary of the driving principles of pastoralism is cited by Noel Pearson, "Mabo and the Humanities: Shifting Frontiers", The Humanities and A Creative Nation: Jubilee Essays ed. Deryck M. Schreuder (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1995), 52.

41. R.W. Connell, Ruling Class Ruling Culture: Studies of conflict, power and hegemony in Australian life (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1977), 195.

42. Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 53, my emphasis. For Australian histories of "history as progress", see Robert Dixon, The Course of Empire: Neo-Classical Culture in New South Wales 1788-1860 (Melbourne and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); John Docker, The Nervous Nineties: Australian Cultural Life in the 1890s (Melbourne and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lynette Finch, The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, Class and Surveillance (Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 1993); Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, Dark Side of the Dream: Australian literature and the postcolonial mind (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990); Humphrey McQueen, A New Britannia (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970); Rosemary Pringle, "Octavius Beale and the Ideology of the Birthrate. The Royal Commissions of 1904 and 1905", Refractory Girl 3 (Winter 1973), 19-27; Kerreen M. Reiger, The Disenchantment of The Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); Henry Reynolds, The Law of the Land (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987); Elizabeth Windschuttle, ed., Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978 (Melbourne: Fontana, 1980).

43. Donald Denoon, Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 207.

44. Max Walsh's distinction was to be even-handed in blaming both sides of politics for "debauching the legacy" (17) in the late 1960s and early 70s, and to hold out no real hope of a solution: "[Australia] ..will be a willing quarry for the rest of the world but little more than that. ... It will be a land where the rich do get richer and the poor more numerous and poorer. It will be a country on the verge of losing its democratic values" (226).

45. "Panorama: The Live, The Dead and the Living".

46. See Tony Bennett, Patrick Buckridge, David Carter and Colin Mercer, eds, Celebrating the Nation: A critical Study of Australia's Bicentenary (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992); Turner, Making It National, ch. 4.

47. A particular focus was the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras; see Gay Hawkins, From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing Community Arts (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

48. R. Goodman, The Last Entrepreneurs: America's Regional Wars for Jobs and Dollars (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1979), cited in Edward W. Soja, Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (London and New York: Verso, 1989), 173. Soja glosses "regional war" as "an intensified territorial competition that stretches across the whole hierarchy of spatial locales."

49. David Harvey, "Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanization: Reflections on 'Post-Modernism' in the American City", Antipode 19/3 (1987), 260-86. See also Gordon Clark, "Planning in a World of Economic Restructuring", Planning and Developing Australia: Papers Delivered at the Twenty-First Congress of The Royal Australian Planning Institute (Melbourne: RAPI, 1988), 1-25.

50. "Sydney Tower", Island Magazine 9/10 (March 1982), 53-61.

51. Roland Barthes, The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1979).

52. Roland Barthes, "Change The Object Itself", Image-Music-Text, selected and trans. Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana, 1979), 165-9.

53. Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison [first published in French as Surveiller et punir], trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977).

54. Jean Baudrillard, L'effet beaubourg: Implosion et dissuasion (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1977).

55. See Laura Mulvey, Visual and Other Pleasures (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

56. Geoffrey Blainey, The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966).

57. David Bromfield, "Making the Modern in the Newest City in the World", Aspects of Perth Modernism 1929-1942 (Perth: Centre for Fine Arts, 1988), 2-8.

58. See my "Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and Crocodile Dundee", The Pirate's Fiancee: feminism, reading, postmodernism (London: Verso, 1988), 241-269. The phrase "positive unoriginality" is adapted from a comment about Australians made in 1913 by the US feminist Jessie Ackermann: "They are positively unable to originate. Everything is a copy with some small alteration, usually a disadvantage to the

subject" (245).

59. Jacques de Weerdt, "L'espace rural francais: vocation touristique ou processus de touristification?" Paper presented to the 1990 World Congress of the International Sociological Association, Madrid. The phrase "citizen-tourists" is from Robert Somol, "'... You Put me in a Happy State': The Singularity of Power in Chicago's Loop", Copyright 1 (Fall 1987), 98-118. Future references in parentheses in the text.

60. I discuss examples of this discourse on cultural remodelling for tourism in "Panorama: The Live, The Dead and the Living". See also Jennifer Craik, Resorting to Tourism, and John Urry, The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies (London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: Sage 1990).

61. On this period, see Artlink 10.1/2 (1990), "Contemporary Aboriginal Art"; Postmodernism: A Consideration of the Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery ed. Sue Cramer (Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 1989); Henrietta Fourmile, "Aboriginal Heritage Legislation and Self-Determination", Australian-Canadian Studies 7.1-2 (1989), 45-61; Adrian Marrie, "Museums and Aborigines: A Case Study in Internal Colonialism", Australian-Canadian Studies 7.1-2 (1989), 63-80.

62. Books that directly influenced public culture in the 1980s include Diane Bell's Daughters of the Dreaming (Melbourne and North Sydney: McPhee Gribble with Allen & Unwin, 1983); Kevin Gilbert's Living Black (London and Ringwood: Allen Lane, 1977); Sally Morgan's My Place (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987); Henry Reynolds's The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982) and The Law of the Land (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987). For the impact of these developments on white feminist concepts of history, see Ann Curthoys For and Against Feminism (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 136-49. More recently, publicity about the forcible adoption of Aboriginal children by the state (up to and including the 1960s) has further eroded the complacency of white feminist discourses on "home": see Coral Edwards and Peter Read, The Lost Children (Sydney and New York: Doubleday, 1992).

63. Margo Huxley and Kate Kerkin, "What Price The Bicentennial? A Political Economy of Darling Harbour", Transition: Discourse on Architecture, 26 (Spring 1988), 57-64

64. Leonie Sandercock, Cities for Sale: Property, politics and urban planning in Australia (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977).

65. See Lawrence Grossberg, We gotta get out of this place: popular conservatism and postmodern culture.

66. Eric Michaels, Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 138-9.

67. Emile Benveniste, Problèmes de linguistique generale (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 237-50.

68. Interdisciplinary feminism is not much help with my real doubts about cultural criticism that claims the status of "history". On the one hand, some Australian defenders of traditional history have followed US figures such as Gertrude Himmelfarb in simulating panic about feminist and minority "violence" in the discipline; see Windschuttle, The Killing of History. On the other hand, many Australian feminist historians have shown even less sympathy than their US counterparts for a mode of criticism solemnly said by some to entail the belief that "there are no real women"; Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, Creating A Nation (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1994), 4; see also Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, Telling the Truth About History (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1994). For a discussion of these issues, see Curthoys and Docker, "Is History Fiction?".

69. Jean Baudrillard, Simulations trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

70. Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

71. In his Reading The Popular (London and Boston: 1989), Fiske locates progressive pleasure in Chicago's Sears Tower (199-217).

72. On the monorail debate, see John Docker, Postmodernism and Popular Culture: A Cultural History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 90-102.

73. Somol, "'... You Put me in a Happy State': The Singularity of Power in Chicago's Loop".

74. While aesthetic postmodernism has played most overtly with the paradoxes of "theory as progress", "post" rhetorics in general tend to pose this problem; see Ann McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'," Social Text 31/32 (1992), 84-98.

75. See Perry Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution", Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 317-38; Marshall Berman, "The Signs in the Street: a response to Perry Anderson", New Left Review 144 (1984), 114-23; Paul Willemen, "Response to Donzelot", The Apprehension of Time ed. Don Barry and Stephen Muecke (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1988), 28-32.

76. I prefer the term "rhetorical" criticism; the notion of "textualism" used in cultural studies (often with pejorative intent) seems to me a misnomer based on a belief that US literary formalist constructions of "the text" are the only ones that count. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into this debate. However, see Frow and Morris, eds, Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader, xix.

77. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963). First published in 1958.

78. Ian Hunter, Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education (London: MacMillan, 1988).

79. Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 75-148.

80. It follows from this that I accord no analytical value to the dichotomies of meaning/use, reading/acting, text/context and production/consumption that to date have underpinned the big debates of methodology in cultural studies. Since these recur with a tenacity that is remarkable given the degree to which they are incompatible with both the post-structuralist epistemologies and the Marxian political philosophies espoused by so many of the scholars who use them, I can only see these dichotomies as symptoms of, or stake-markers in, demarcation disputes and power struggles between academic disciplines. It is not my concern here to address these. However, I do discuss some of the analytical effects of using such dichotomies in Chapters One and Two.

81. Noel Pearson, "Mabo and the Humanities: Shifting Frontiers", 43.

82. See my "Afterthoughts on Australianism", Cultural Studies 6/3 (1992), 468-475. I would argue that in ignoring the materiality of aesthetic forms, cultural studies has reproduced many of the classical problems of Marxist literary criticism; see John Frow, Marxism and Literary History (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

83. Pierre Bourdieu, La distinction: critique sociale du jugement (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

84. See John Frow, Cultural Studies and Cultural Value (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

85. I find Horne's concept of "public culture" more useful, because more precise and more limited in scope, than the notion of a "public sphere". However, I have also drawn on the useful reworking of the broader and more familiar concept in Bruce Robbins, ed., The Phantom Public Sphere (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), and Public Culture 7.1 (1994), "On Thinking the Black Public Sphere".

86. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984).

87. Slavoj Zizek, "Aime la nation comme toi-même où le libéralisme et ses vicissitudes en Europe de l'Est." Futur Antérieur 8 (1991): 76-98.

88. At least, it could be construed as a traditional theme by post-War historiography. See Manning Clark, The Quest for an Australian Identity (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1979).

89. Ross Gibson, The Diminishing Paradise: Changing Literary Perceptions of Australia (Sydney and London: Angus & Robertson, 1984) and South of the West: Postcolonialism and the Narrative Construction of Australia (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992); Kay Schaffer, Women and the bush: forces of desire in the Australian cultural tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

90. See Julian Thomas, "Heroic and Democratic Histories: Pioneering as a Historical Concept", The UTS Review 2.1 (1996), 58-71.

91. I discuss this in The Pirate's Fianceé, 241-69.

92. A more complex, edgy view of life in a tourist landscape is provided by another comedy of this period, P.J. Hogan's Muriel's Wedding. I discuss this aspect of the film in "Crazy Talk is Not Enough", Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (forthcoming).

93. Directed by Ronald Thompson, Andrew Joshua, Kevin Rogers, Raymond Geoffrey and Brian Burkett, Ngukurr: Weya Wi Na was produced in 1988 by Ngukurr School Council, Ngukurr Adult Education Committee, and Yugul Manggi Media. Thanks to Pat Laughren for introducing me to this film. On Aboriginal television in Central Australia, see Eric Michaels, The Aboriginal Invention of Television in Central Australia 1982-1986 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986).

94. On the history of the Northern Territory as an imaginary site of the Other, see Jon Stratton, "Deconstructing the Territory", Cultural Studies 3.1 (1989), 38-57.

95. See Roberta Sykes, Black Majority (Hawthorn: Hudson, 1989). Aboriginal people won full citizenship rights in 1967, following a referendum approving an amendment of the Constitution.

96. Wai-Teng Leong, "Culture and the state: manufacturing traditions for tourism", Critical Studies in Mass communication 6 (1989), 355-75.

97. See Johannes Fabian's famous critique of "allachronism" -- casting the other into another time -- in Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

Chapter One

AT HENRY PARKES MOTEL

A motel is a motel anywhere...

Robert Venturi

I.

BRICK WALL

<i>On the 24th October 1889 Sir Henry Parkes Colonial Secretary and Past member for Tenterfield made his Historic Federation Speech. As a result of this Speech the Commonwealth of Australia was formed.</i>	<i>The Sydney Mail referred to Sir Henry Parkes as Australia's Most Farsighted Statesman. This Motor Inn is located 180 metres from the Place where that Famous Speech was delivered. It is called "The Henry Parkes" in Honour of this Great Statesman.</i>
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There is a Legend inscribed on the street-front wall of the Henry Parkes Motor Inn, Tenterfield.

It tells a story about one of the representative Great Men of colonial New South Wales -- an immigrant, self-made man, traveller, poet, journalist, and an indefatigable patriarch in his family and political life -- founding the modern nation with a speech-act.¹

It is also the story of a journey famous only for being interrupted in a small rural town. Parkes was returning to Sydney by train from Brisbane after talks with Queensland leaders, and stopped in Tenterfield to issue the equivalent of a press release -- an after-dinner Oration. The story of his speech is repeated now to attract the attention of travellers passing through that town today.

I would like to be able to say that a reading of this Legend in situ provides a useful starting point for a feminist essay on history in popular culture.

It raises familiar questions about the past represented in the present (myths of nationality, origin, engendering). It does so in a context formed by everyday cultural activities -- driving, stopping at a motel, tourism, small town life -- in which the Legend is used to engender effects of place. It attempts to persuade passing tourists to stop, and to define the town to its residents. To thematise relations between past and present, mobility and placement, is the minimal semiotic (promotional) program of any memorial-motel. The Henry Parkes in this respect is usefully self-reflexive.

A feminist reading could question, for example, whether the myths of national and local history produced in the practices of tourism may also imply, and intersect with, a gendering of the spatio-temporal operations (movement/placement) on which those practices depend.

This is a question about representation: figures (moving) in a landscape. But a feminist reading would also want to invest any motel context with effective social significance.

Motels are often used today as privileged sites of a road-runner angst (the Paris, Texas model). In that guise, they usually signify a transcendental homelessness. But with its peculiar function as a place of escape yet a home-away-from-home, the motel can be rewritten as a transit-place for women able to use it. On the one hand, motels have had liberating effects in the history of women's mobility. They can offer increased safety to that figure whom Trollope once described as The Unprotected Female Tourist, and promise decreased bother to women on "holiday" with their families.² On the other hand, they fix new sites of placement for domestic, affective and sexual labour, paid as well as unpaid.³

So the motel can be used to frame and displace, without effacing, the association of men with travel and women with home that organises so many historic Australian "legends"⁴ -- in academic as well as popular and recycled touristic forms. A memorial-motel is a complex site of production, and one in which conflictual social relations cannot sensibly be ignored.

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But if the text of a motel Legend seems to represent a likely point of departure, a tour of recent cultural studies can make it surprisingly hard to get there.

For each direction of research I've mentioned, there is a different kind of objection.

Firstly, there's a problem about what counts as the proper use of time in analysis of popular culture. Iain Chambers, for example, declares in Popular Culture that since "in the end, it is not individual signs, demanding isolated

attention, but the resulting connections or 'bricolage' -- the style, the fashion, the image -- that count", we should, in response to popular culture, refrain from resubjecting it to "the contemplative stare" of "official culture".<sup>5</sup> To linger too long at a motel wall, or to "read" its inscription too closely, requires a tempo inappropriate to my object: such reading "demands moments of attention that are separated from the run of daily life". The past-in-the-present is now a look, not a text.

Then there is a problem about placement. For Georges van den Abbeele in "Sightseers: the Tourist as Theorist", studious reading does not contradict the daily pursuits of tourism. He sees them as fellow travellers: tourism is already a mode of cultural studies, and a contemplative mode at that.<sup>6</sup> It can involve research, interpretation, and prolonged moments of intense attention. Yet for him too, there is a trap involved in lingering at an inscription. The Legend of Henry Parkes is what he calls, following Dean MacCannell, a marker -- a sign constructing a "sight".<sup>7</sup> In studying it, both tourist and theorist can be caught up in a metaphysical quest. Each is motivated by desire "to make present to himself a conceptual schema which would give him immediate access to a certain authenticity (the 'real nature' of his object of study)".

So if I insist to the first objection that the Legend of Parkes is a tourist tale of politics made on the run, and to the second that it marks for critical inspection a (phallo)logocentric myth, from either side this motel wall represents, as an object of reading, a desire to limit

movement by constructing a singular place. Here comes a third kind of difficulty. For numerous theorists of travel (Fussell, Baudrillard and Virilio, for example) there is no such "place" to start with. The trouble with a motel as a site of analysis is not the familiar gap between a text (a particular motel-in-place) and reading practices (the multiplicity of its uses). Nor is it the pertinence of talking in this way about a bit of the built environment, or a segment of everyday life. The trouble is that, whatever they may say, motels in fact demolish sense-regimes of place, locale and "history". For these theorists, motels memorialise only movement, speed and perpetual circulation.

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So the project of reading should retreat, perhaps, and recommence, with a view on the run from the road. This is to follow the line of least resistance, a "populist" approach -- though to depart, in order to arrive, is a time-consuming, place-fixating, activity. One reason for pursuing it, though, is that it's the kind of popular practice that motels work to foster. Another is that it lets me discard, en route, some encumbrances.

### The Glimpse

You can see from the highway it's a tempting motel, an obvious place to stop. If you come in to town from the South, one surge brings you over the mountain and down a slope to the Motor Inn at the bottom. A radiant promise of SPA POOL SAUNA

GYM (and in these cold climes, CENTRAL HEATING) flares out, day and night, at the delicate moment dividing a long, hard haul from Sydney from an easy cruise into Brisbane. This is the last town before the Queensland border. As a scenic view on the northbound road, the Henry Parkes is perfectly timed.

From the North, the approach is less dramatic. Tenterfield is only the first real town in New South Wales, and you would already have driven through most of it. It's pretty, with willows and old stone buildings, but after some three blocks of deserted main street there's not a great deal to stop for. But there's a long, level view of the Henry Parkes on the other side of the highway. Its design is imposing enough to beg serious attention: verandahs curving grandly around a garden courtyard, white-sashed Georgian windows, and on the front wall of the nearest wing, a large commemorative scroll. Clearly a motel, it might also be a gracious residence; a country resort; a health centre; a historic public building. From this direction, the Henry Parkes suggests serious leisure instead of a night's salvation.

### Scan

Personified models of action (the weary itinerant coming to rest, the reflective tourist sampling the country...) are commonly produced by travel narratives set in and around motels. Any well-designed motel can cite and mobilise a number of these without imposing any one too explicitly. Indeed, the

motel form (or chronotope, in Bakhtin's terms) has become so richly mythic in our culture that any one motel anywhere must constrain the possibilities.<sup>8</sup> An amorphous, general motelness can be commercially unconvincing at any price except to connoisseurs of the basic.

It isn't simply a matter of suggesting, for "high speed comprehension" across vast space,<sup>9</sup> a competitive definition of style (cost, ambience, clientele). Motels are transit spaces, charged with narrative potential. A motel should promise a scenario, and exactly the one you want: a hiding place, a good night's sleep, a stint of poignant alienation, a clandestine adventure, time off housework, a monastic retreat...promises which need have nothing to do with what anyone subsequently does. Veering off the road and into the drive of any motel setting, we seek shelter, rest and safety but we also assess a script (even, or even especially, at the lone motel, in the middle of nowhere, no commercial rivals for miles).

The Henry Parkes is distinguished from its close competition by the sense of a "complex" it generates. The major rival is straight across the road -- the Jumbuck, a Homestead Inn. The familiar "H" sign for the chain aficionado is in thick nailed board, and its woodiness is the single concession, apart from the motel's name, to a code of bush nostalgia. The Jumbuck is aggressively serial in theme ("You're Home", wherever you are): the asphalt yard is for parking, no nonsense with stately courtyards; a few routine flowers, no pretentiously landscaped shrubs; and, unusually for a New England motel, no effort at Georgian sashing. The

sliding windows are uncompromisingly functional, with mean proportions outlined by the plain aluminium of a hardline, no-frills modernism. The Jumbuck makes minimal use of allusiveness to other building forms. It could be, at best, a raw new home in a brand-name housing settlement. Anywhere else, the same design might merely be motel-basic. But opposite the florid expanse of the Henry Parkes it claims austerity and rigour. The Jumbuck is a real motel, for travellers on serious business.

So the reflective tourist arrives at a scholastic dilemma where Miles St meets Rouse St, Tenterfield. On one side of the road, a myth of the Modern Universal: seriality, chain self-reference, territorialisation by repetition-and-difference; "a Homestead is a Homestead everywhere". On the other, Postmodern Particularity: bricolage individuality-effect, pluralist pastiche coding, localisation by simulated aura: "this motel is The Motel in Tenterfield".

In each case, the major signifiers of these myths are equally myths of Australianness (the motel signs: Jumbuck, Henry Parkes) and of Home (the suburban referent of their design). But these function quite differently on either side of the road. The Jumbuck is a national-identity synecdoche, as internationalising in form as a Tudor Inn or a Ten Gallon Hat; its model of "home" is a standardised housing. The Henry Parkes, in contrast, advertises personality: a locale appropriates a "historic" name, to claim special regional significance; and the "home" it offers is a middle-class splendour, customised to connote "uniqueness". The Jumbuck is

a motel to use, the Henry Parkes a place to visit.

### Quandary

On the road, the choice can be quickly reduced to price, availability, mood. So for some reflective tourists, there could be no choice involved. A motel, by definition, can never be a true place: the locality-effect of the Henry Parkes is an optical illusion.

Following an influential distinction derived from Daniel Boorstin, for example, any motel is necessarily one of the "pseudo-places" defining the tourist world.<sup>10</sup> For Paul Fussell, the characteristic sign of the pseudo-place is, from Disneyland to the airport, Switzerland to the shopping centre, a calculated readability.<sup>11</sup> True places are opaque to the passing observer, and "require" active response -- ideally, the rich interpretation that was "literature" in the lost era of "travel". Pseudo-places achieve an artificial transparency, inducing the passivity typical of "tourism". It follows that motels juxtaposed in space can only be rival pseudo-places. In Tenterfield, itself part place, part pseudo-place, the most that could be said in these terms is that while The Jumbuck celebrates its pseudo status, the Henry Parkes tries to hide it. The difference is mere variation apprehended in a high-speed, empiricist flash. Indeed, the rapidity with which I can "recognise" the difference would be a sign of its pseudo-status.

Given its dependence on cultural elitism and on a realist

epistemology, the idea of the "pseudo" has shown a surprising tenacity in cultural studies. Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality owes a good deal to Boorstin's work, and can be written back into its terms.<sup>12</sup> In Baudrillard's world of third-order simulacra, the encroaching pseudo-places finally merge to eliminate places entirely. This merger is a founding event: once it has taken place, the true, like the real, begins to be reproduced in the image of the pseudo, which begins to become the true. This event is also foundational for Baudrillard's theory, since it is only after such a "merger" that the concept of the pseudo (which Baudrillard often calls the Imaginary) can at last be abandoned by theory. When there is no more difference between place and pseudo-place, new terms must be announced to match the spaces of our experience (simulation, seduction, ob-scenity). The "pseudo" lingers, however, like a ghost of the annunciation: without some sign of a once-present difference which has now disappeared, the new order could not be proclaimed.

In this optic, my two motels can only be "recognised" as generators of a hyperreal country-town. Adjacent features -- old houses, paddocks, sheep -- become, like "rural" faces in the street, indifferently either vestiges of the old order of the Real, or simulacra of the old (more true than the true, more rural than the rural) for the new order of hyperreality.

For both Fussell and Baudrillard, the irreality of motels is of an objective order. Both write allegories of subjects in movement halting here and there in an obdurately recognisable landscape: where Fussell's tourist requires the known,



Baudrillard's theorist always finds it.

### Acceleration

A slightly different rejection of the Henry Parkes can be produced by simply not stopping -- writing the subject as a zooming observer, and tourism as a history of speed.

For Paolo Prato and Gianluca Trivero, scanning Fussell's use of Boorstin via the work of Paul Virilio:

Speed undoes places (events [faits] become non-events [défaits], Paul Virilio) and a succession of pseudo-places reduces the complexity of the environment to hotel chains, motorway restaurants, service stations, airports, shopping centres, underpasses, etc.<sup>13</sup>

And indeed, for Virilio speed consumes time, narrative and subjectivity as well as space: speed is itself a "non-place", and the users of transit spaces, transit-towns (like airports) are spectral: "tenants... for a few hours instead of years, their fleeting presence is in proportion to their unreality and to that of the speed of their voyage".<sup>14</sup>

In the "accelerated impressionism"<sup>15</sup> of an aesthetics of disappearance, "the" landscape becomes a blur, a streak, and no sense of place can survive.

But if there is a spectre haunting transit-space in these racy formulations, it is perhaps the figure of the peasant

rather than that of the short-term tenant. Duration, stability, accumulated experience, reality itself are assumed, in this discourse, to be products of relative immobility in a permanent and singular place: which is to say, they are rhetorically immobilised categories. They don't really move in history, or transform in response to transition. The founding myth for these writers is not geographic (a progressive encroachment of the pseudo-sphere) but historical: the trauma of "humanity's" first train ride, the thrill of first contact with cinema.<sup>16</sup> Unlike Baudrillard's hyperrealist, however, the subject of Virilian zoom analysis is eternally fixed in his originary traumatic moment. Hurling on in the accelerating placelessness of speed, he's a figure in chronic stasis.

### U-turn

However, Virilio's notion of the "lodgement" as a "strategic installation" (establishing "fixed address" as a monetary and social value in the history of mobilisation) allows for slowing the pace.<sup>17</sup> A motel is a type of installation that mediates, in spatial, social and monetary terms, between a fixed address, or domicile, and, in the legal sense, "vagrancy". It performs this function precisely as a transit place, a fixed address for temporary lodgement.

Furthermore, the installation of any one motel can easily be seen as strategic. There is not only rhetorical competition with neighbours ("address" projected in space), but a conative effort at stopping the traffic over days as well as moments,

to slow transients into tourists and divert energy to places (the motel and its vicinity). The aim of a specialist motel like the Henry Parkes is an elaboration on this -- an attempt from a small-town highway spot to alter urban maps of significance. The ploy assumes the transience and plasticity, not the fixity, of meanings constructed in space. So to stop to examine such an effort is also to construct a strategic installation: rather than halting for confirmation (collecting theoretical brochures) at exemplary places or performing their disappearance (hypostasising motion), it places reading transitionally at a site, in a process of place-invention.

### Tour

Highway clichés aside, the Henry Parkes foyer is in fact a place where the "fixed" and the "mobile" meet. Adorned with all the conventional signs of tourism and moteldom, it is both a front office to one wing of the motel, and a work-space extension to the family home a few steps away on the left -- with activity spilling between them.

To a new arrival looking around, the relationships between parts of the complex are hard to stabilise.

Behind the family home, designed to blend with the motel, is a public sports centre with a large and well-equipped gym; and the passage to it from the motel negotiates a garden-with-pool landscaped in suburban "backyard" styling. Like many motels with a sporting motif, the Henry Parkes can double as an informal community centre; the therapeutic motel-function

extends into the local leisure economy. So at any moment, and in most of the spaces defining the complex, there is constant intermingling of the "host" family's domestic life, the social activities of town residents, and the passing diversions of tourists. The motel's solidity as place is founded by its flexibility as frame for varying practices of space, time, and speed.

This art of motel extension projects rhetorical identity in space in a manner quite different from that analysed by Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour for facades on the Las Vegas strip. In those highway-inflected structures, they see a functional distinction between front and back reflected in formal design: "Regardless of the front, the back of the building is styleless, because the whole is turned towards the front and no one sees the back".<sup>18</sup> A front/back regionalisation model<sup>19</sup> is thus rewritten as a distinction between a surface (persuasive) rhetoric, which varies, and a deep (enabling) grammar, which does not -- "the neutral, systems-motel structures behind ... survive a succession of facelifts and a series of themes up front".

The Henry Parkes abandons these distinctions. The facade theme is developed, not restricted or deflated, by the intricate regions behind. The country-resort experience begins on the street and runs all the way back to the fence. As a strategic installation this motel works against the codes of highway-inflection -- and in fact, against the pull of the highway. It intrudes into the traffic flow to inflect it towards the town.

It is as a small-business "front", then, that the Henry Parkes effects a rural solution to the problem defined by Venturi. Its production of itself as a "place", and of Tenterfield as a tourist setting, isn't simply a logical progression from the dynamics of highway competition but an effort to reverse and exploit the highway's effect on small towns. It is a common device used by theme-motels in locations of fragile importance, and one that still allows for variation along the lines described by Venturi. Other sports-theme motels, for example, may function primarily as working body-conversion centres or as exotic health-and-beauty farms. In this case, place is produced in Tenterfield as a strongly-built form of residency.

Inside the complex, the resident family, visiting locals, and motel guests all share in a pervasive production of "home"<sup>20</sup>. The Henry Parkes offers locals not only a little work and an inspiring architectural model of the "beautiful residence", but the raw material ("strangers") for further home-town promotion. The coherence of the Henry Parkes complex is an embracing and durable familialism. Here, the touristic, the neighbourly and the proprietorial are related not by opposition (mobile vs. fixed, touristic vs. everyday, itinerant vs. domestic) but along a spectrum divided by degrees of duration, intensities of "staying" -- temporary, intermittent, permanent.

Being there

Bannered across a brick wall, curved elegantly around a plaque and bust, is a legend of a famous Visitor. This is the motel's foundation-stone, its anchorage in History -- national (the Federation of Australia), regional (the Tenterfield Oration) and personal (the motel's naming).

For a cursory glance, the ornate script of the Legend and the bronze-effect of the bust need do little more than signify period-nostalgia. For most tourists, no doubt, there it stops. Another kind of cursory glance could read, yet again, the disappearance of history in myth. On this wall, the bitter class struggles of the late nineteenth century, the machinations of a fading patriarch still grasping at political influence, the displacement of the Aboriginal people<sup>21</sup> and so the very history of this town, this site, in battles for land, wealth, power and the right to determine "Progress"<sup>22</sup> -- all, indifferently, are obliterated by a cloying and sentimentalised sign of the past as timeless colonial style.

An experienced history-tourist could even defy the anecdotal status of the Legend, and make it an accessory to the motel's familial myth. It was Parkes, after all (reformer and titular founder of housing, health, prison, transport, communications and education programs) who married, in 1890, the dream of a white Australia to a nostalgia for Britain as "home" -- casting, in a memorable and much-commemorated form, the Imperial Family legend: "The crimson thread of kinship", his descendants would repeat, "runs through us all".<sup>23</sup>

Yet there is an imbalance between this all-embracing interpretation of the motel-myth and the scroll's quite casual

position. On the one hand, the Legend ascribes great powers to the Word (Parkes spoke, and as a result, Australia federated) and to the authority of media citation ("The Sydney Mail" creates Parkes' status). On the other hand -- who reads it? what powers does a scroll exercise? the cypress pines in front of it grow taller... the locals can ignore it, most tourists may not see it, and who has heard now, anyway, of Henry Parkes? It has the power, at best, to send some trade down the road to see the Place of the Oration. Few travellers, one must imagine, can be expected to take their pleasure in knowingly sleeping and eating 180 metres away from a site of enunciation.

Who can say? Who knows about "the others"? This is one problem that the scroll can raise, with its story about an exemplary figure's fiat. What actions are performed by positing ideal models of a theoretical practice and a speaking position "appropriate" to popular culture? The motel gives pause to think about the question. To give pause is the primary function of the motel as motel anywhere. Back in the rooms of this one there is, in the midst of a comfortable mix of mod-cons and period-effects, strategically installed, under a window beside the TV, that contemplative place -- a desk.

II.

DOMESTIC PURSUITS

Political Philosophy.

*Under which thimble - quick! if you please -  
Under which thimble now are the peas?  
Juggle on juggle, all the day long, -  
Sir, you are right! - ah no! - you are wrong!*

*Then it was R, and now it is C<sup>24</sup>, -  
None of your eyes could follow the pea;  
How it was smuggled nobody shows,  
How it was juggled nobody knows.*

*Juggle on juggle, day after day,  
Life is a struggle, do what we may;  
Wait for our next, and then you shall see  
Which is the thimble holding the pea.*

*Juggle on juggle all the day long,  
None are quite right, and none are all wrong;  
Life is a struggle ever up hill,  
Life is a juggle, say what you will!*

Henry Parkes<sup>25</sup>

*(Of all Parkes' features as a self-made man, few caused more*



*hilarity to critics during and after his lifetime than his untutored efforts at Poetry -- except perhaps the "wandering aspirates" that gave his class origins away. He published five volumes of verse, including many poems about the joys of travel, and others about domestic bliss enjoyed at home with his wife.)*

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In "Sightseers: The Tourist as Theorist", Georges Van den Abbeele makes this comment on the kind of itinerary I've just produced:

The ritualizing and/or institutionalizing of the voyage can also be an attempt to achieve a certain immediacy (of knowledge, of presence) through the realization of a priorly conceived project. One attempts to circumvent the delay in cognition by being there so to speak before one has begun, by preparing an "ambush" so that when the experience takes place it can be grasped as fully present.(9)

His article is an intricate commentary on Dean MacCannell's book, The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class. MacCannell argues that tourism emerges in a society no longer dependent on alienated labour but on "alienated leisure", in which "reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere."(3)<sup>26</sup> Tourism is a quest to find them. But this quest is made impossible by the very structure of modern tourism. It is defined by a "semiotics of attraction", in

which something (the marker) represents a "sight" to someone (the tourist). Claiming to indicate the sight, the markers delimit and produce it; without the proliferation of information and itineraries, the tourist would not be able to distinguish the "sight" from its "surroundings". Thinking that he is grasping the reality of a different world, the tourist is in fact always reading the signs of tourism -- that is, signs of difference.

In Van den Abbeele's gloss on this argument, a tourist does research for his trip not merely to avoid discomfort in strange places, but to prepare himself, like an assiduous art student (or a pursuivant of the pea of truth in politics), for grasping the eventual authentic "sight". So the tourist as auto-didact is perpetually involved in producing and reproducing a metaphysics of presence. He hopes to "ambush" the sight, but he is always already ambushed by the marker-sight relation.

The trap laid here is unavoidable: and, in one sense, it is in fact the inevitability of "ambush" that is, like the pious moral of Parkes' Cynical philosophy, the "desk" in my writing on the wall, always already present to Van den Abbeele's argument.

Rather than retrace the path towards it, I want to side-step to consider the moves by which Tourism and Theory are read, in this argument, as exemplary, parallel instances of a teleological drive.<sup>27</sup> It is difficult to do justice in summary to Van den Abbeele's text, not only because of its complexity but because of its shifting relations to the text of The

Tourist. To simplify, I shall disarm my own ambush by exposing it at the beginning. Van den Abbeele will argue that the totalising projects of both Tourism and Theory could be displaced by a theoretico-practical Nomadism. I will read his argument as developing from three major oppositions that he works to deconstruct -- voyage/home, Man/difference, theory/tourism. They do not function as equivalents of each other, but I shall read each of them as marked by an implicit valorisation of the first term as "masculine", that is, unmarked-human: a valorisation which survives the deconstructive move and in doing so enables an elimination of politics (for example, an activism of the "toured") from Van den Abbeele's trajectory.

### Voyage/home

In his reading of MacCannell, Van den Abbeele accepts that a search for "destination" is endemic to tourism. Doing so allows him to develop a strong analogy between "tourism" and "theory" using the classic epistemological metaphor of the voyage. He also limits that metaphor's deployment by reading it as a model of narrative structure. The key figures connecting these operations are "home", or the "domus", and "domestication":

The tourist theorizes because he is already en route and caught up in a chaotic, fragmented universe that needs to be domesticated. The very concept of "the

voyage" is this domestication in that it demarcates one's traveling like the Aristotelian plot into a beginning, a middle and an end. In the case of the tourist, the beginning and the end are the same place, "home". It is in relation to this home or domus then that everything which falls into the middle can be "domesticated".(9).

In this account, the project of domestication fails not only because of the gap between marker and sight but because the tourist's interpretation always temporally "lags" behind the activity of voyaging. Domestication is an effort to catch up cognitively with the ever-fleeing experience, or the "motion", of being en route. It is thus an attempt to contain and deny the precedence, as well as the excess, of process over structure. The tourist's problem with "lag" here becomes, I think, a model of a more fundamental dilemma said to define the speaking-being.

Van den Abeele's is an account of the "circular structure of referentiality", in which the domus really functions as the ultimate ambush awaiting the tourist. As the fixed point to which the tourist's theorising attempts to refer, the domus is not only always already receding as the voyage begins (the designation "home" is an "eminently retrospective gesture") but will never be the same when the tourist attempts to "return". Home has moved on while the tourist moved away, and the tourist returns transformed by the process of "domesticating" experience elsewhere. Van den Abeele's tourist

is trapped, of course, not only by his own myth of Presence, and by the aporia of his empiricism, but by a literary variant of both -- Tristram Shandy's dilemma. His Tourist, chasing "himself" in time, is a doomed but indomitable realist, forever pursuing a pea.

One problem with this account is the place it accords to "activity", "effort" and "labour". These terms are made operative only for the voyage, not "home" (the elusive ideal that motivates the journey). The domus is not reciprocally constructed as a site of work, theoretical or otherwise. Van den Abbeele is quite attentive to the significance of practical activities in tourism (boarding planes, checking in baggage, taking taxis, getting out of bed...), but it is strictly, as the ordering of this list suggests, in relation to the rituals of arrival and departure that extend the "voyage" into the domestic space, and make its beginning impossible to fix. That is to say, "home" is at once a space which is blank (so, impossible), and a site of recessiveness: the voyage intrudes into the home, not vice versa (except as a dream of nostalgia). The domus, therefore, is figuratively constructed not only as a womb, but as unproductive -- a womb prior to labour.

Furthermore, if the work of tourism (research, reading the markers, theorising the voyage) is a "domestication", it is because the domestic is understood in the romantic sense of a "taming" and a "naturalisation". There is no necessary logical connection between the concepts of coherence and unity (which the tourist tries to impose on a "chaotic and

fragmented universe") and those of home and womb (between which, again, there is no necessary connection). But of course, there is a powerful cultural link, one dear to a masculinist tradition inscribing "home" as the site both of frustrating containment (home as dull) and of truth to be rediscovered (home as real). The stifling home is the place from which the voyage begins, and to which, in the end, it returns.

An extreme version may be read in Sam Shepard's Motel Chronicles. On the left hand page, a poem: the world-weary drifter declares, in a moment of "domesticating" his experiences while not-at-home, "I've about seen/ all the nose jobs capped teeth and silly-cone tits I can handle/ I'm heading back to my natural woman."<sup>28</sup> On the right a photograph of a woman in a house or motel laundry -- her body balanced beautifully between the ironing board and the washing machine. Shepard, in this instance, is the more rigorous theorist of the domus. Labour is inscribed on both sides: Man on voyage (writing poem) positions Woman in domus (with washing).

In Van den Abbeele's text, the restriction of work to the voyage prevents this sort of crudity from emerging in his schema. It also blocks reflection on the schema's cultural history; it defines, for him, a purely epistemological problem ("the metaphysics of the voyage"). A feminist reading can ask, therefore, what happens to that problem, and the voyage/domus opposition, if "home", rather than the voyage, is rewritten as chaos and fragmentation, labour, transience, "lag" -- or in quite different terms, since these remain parasitic on the

voyage<sup>29</sup>. For Van den Abbeele, however, the possibility of rewriting "home" cannot emerge any more than a feminist desire to do so does. The tourist leaving and returning to the blank space of the domus is, and will remain, an in-different "him".

### Man/difference

One reason for this blankness is that Van den Abbeele follows Dean MacCannell at least some way towards displacing the "working class" with the "new leisure class" (of tourists) as a privileged site for analysing modernity. MacCannell considers work used as a tourist-spectacle -- work displays -- to be the very definition of "alienated leisure"; we now work to tour other people working. In Van Den Abbeele's text, non-theoretical "work" drops from sight: the elision of work from the domus simply follows from accepting that the tourist's social "home" is a society of alienated leisure.<sup>30</sup>

Another reason is that van den Abbeele goes further than MacCannell in theorising tourism, and thus "modernity", as a production of differences, and spectacles of difference. This requires a digression to look at The Tourist in more detail.

MacCannell argued that rather than being organised by simple dualities (capital/labour, men/women...), modernisation is an institutionalised process of "social structural differentiation". This means "the totality of differences between social classes, life-styles, racial and ethnic groups, age grades...political and professional groups and the mythic representation of the past to the present" (11). In his

version of this classic diagnosis of the modern condition, MacCannell sees differentiation as the "primary ground" of the feeling of freedom, and also of contradiction, conflict, and alienation, in modern society. Tourism rests on this ground, as a "collective striving" to transcend differentiation and discontinuous experience by grasping the Big Picture. The tourist as alienated but active cultural "producer" is thus, for MacCannell, a model of modern-man-in-general (10).

This is also why the tourist, for MacCannell, always remains an ambivalent figure. On the one hand, "sightseeing is a ritual performed to the differentiations of society" (13). Seeking signs of authentic difference elsewhere, the tourist carries modernisation further afield (imperialism). His quest is foiled not only because tourist attractions have the same structure as the differentiations of modern society, but by the effects of his own action in spreading the "totalising idea" of modernity. Tourism correspondingly helps to secure a "strong society" at home: therefore, it may be fundamentally conservative, as well as destructive in the field of modernity's Others.

On the other hand, the quest at least implies a discontent with "home" (modernity). The issue is complicated by the fact that, while defining the quest as "doomed", MacCannell also wants to reject denigration of tourist activity as inauthentic. It's not just a matter of sympathy for popular culture but also of arguing that the "rhetoric of moral superiority" to tourism is, especially in the form of touristic anti-tourism, in perfect conformity with the logic



of differentiation that motivates tourism. Anti-tourism -- contempt for "the others" -- is not an analytical reflection on tourism, but "part of the problem" (10-11).

So the rehabilitation of the tourist is also achieved by suggesting that the tourist may, through his interpretive labour, have an experience of something like "authenticity". Unlike Paul Fussell, MacCannell's tourist doesn't find his motels and sights and souvenir shops to be "pseudo", but enjoys them and keeps on going. He helps to sustain "a collective agreement that reality and truth exist somewhere in society, and that we ought to be trying to find them and refine them" (155). He is, in his way, a social theorist.

It is only at the last step that Van den Abbeele parts company with MacCannell. He places much greater stress on differentiation as "the marking process" in tourism -- which he radicalises, in a formalist move, as the "actual production" of social differences, rather than the ritual performance of them (10). He also points out that MacCannell's concept of "social structural differentiation" does nothing to modify the totalising impulse of theory (or tourism), since "nothing is so totalising as a concept of differentiation -- nor so apt to be undermined by the very play of differences it attempts to name and de-limit" (13).

For van den Abbeele, the tourist never attains an approximation, or even an intimation, of authenticity, but rather produces social reality as a kind of "figural displacement". It follows that a "radical politics" of tourism will actively affirm the "supplemental play" of the

"inauthentic" marker, rather than trying to grasp the Sight or to insist on difference. That is to say, the radical tourist will not struggle for transcendence and the refinement of social realities, but will deconstruct his theoretical practice as tourist.

At first sight, it seems that Van den Abbeele's move should lead to a deconstructing of the figure of modern-man-in-general (Man). In fact, something different happens. MacCannell's Man acts out the logic of social structural differentiation to which, and of which, he is Subject. That is, "he" is always already socially differentiated (by sex, race, age, lifestyle etc) as a cultural producer, and may be uncomfortable about it. His Manhood, then, is both a grammatical fiction and an unachievable ideal. Van den Abbeele's tourist is actually an indifferent producer of social reality as differentiation: his discomforts emerge not from his own social positioning in difference, but from his philosophical mistakes (seeking authenticity, difference). His Manhood, then, is not an object of struggle -- something to be achieved -- but a presupposition. It still remains the a priori of the voyage.

### Theory/tourism

If the tourist, for MacCannell, is a social theorist, he is a "primitive" one. He is "mystified" about his role in constructing modernity, and his work historically precedes that of the social theorist: "Our first apprehension of modern

civilization ... emerges in the mind of the tourist." (1) But he has a responsive potential, because of his own discontent. So for MacCannell, some resolution of the problems posed by tourism may be achieved by social theorists rethinking and developing it as a mode of "community planning".

Van den Abbeele recoils from both the prospect of "planning" and MacCannell's claim that his theory of tourism can serve as a theory of social totality. Quite reasonably, he points out that it is really a theory of travel, a theory of modernity seen as "a perpetual narrative of adventure", and he turns instead to question the politics of producing such an "all-encompassing" theory. For Van den Abbeele, what is finally at stake is "less the ideology of tourism than the ideological function of theory" (11).

He takes issue with what he sees as MacCannell's eventual reassertion of the "superiority" of the social theorist over the tourist. By giving up his radical "sympathy" for tourism, MacCannell not only reasserts the power of his own position as theorist, but repeats the very gestures of mystified tourism. Both tourist and theorist attempt to ambush Presence. But the theorist has the greater pretension. He wants to be not just a sightseer, but a seer -- a prophet, in possession of knowledge superior to that of "the others". The circle closes: for Van den Abbeele the theorist, even more than the tourist, is "part of the problem".

But whose problem? MacCannell's critique of anti-tourism is based not only on sympathy for the tourist (rejection of elitism) but on a concern for the social consequences of

modernity's "adventure" for places and people toured.<sup>31</sup> It is because of this concern that MacCannell returns in the end to the question of planning. His final position is not simply one of theorist differentiated from tourist but of theorist potentially working with particular communities toured. His position as "seer", then, is more limited in its pretensions than Van den Abbeele can allow.

The "toured" in fact disappear from Van den Abbeele's account as soon as he introduces his critique of the concept of totality. Oddly enough, this happens just as he points out that "not everyone has either the political right or the economic means to travel" (11), and that MacCannell's theory therefore only deals strictly with the "leisure class" rather than with Society. Van den Abbeele then suggests that if travel is "relatively restricted, it must be because of some danger it poses to society's integrity". This is consistent with his own desire to argue that the excess of the voyage can constitute a threat to the domus. But surely one might draw the opposite conclusion: if for some societies travel is relatively unrestricted for large numbers of people, it is because for the "home" society it does not pose much of a danger to its integrity.<sup>32</sup> These societies would be, of course, precisely the developed capitalist countries from which the Tourist (like the Theorist) emerges. This is in fact MacCannell's argument: the tourist as a missionary of modernity has a "totalising" political force and this is exactly why MacCannell sees the "international middle class" as a problem in the first place.<sup>33</sup>

For Van den Abbeele, however, sympathy for the tourist combined with a philosophically principled critique of totality implies only a general transformation of theoretical practice. He proposes a politics of theory in which the excess of the theoretical voyage would not be restrained, and in which the process of theorising would not attempt to refer back to a fixed "theorist's" place in a fixed society. So it is the very presupposition of a fixed position, or domus, that must be questioned.

This familiar, indeed "domestic" conclusion to a deconstructive analysis of the politics of theory then generates a figure to supplant both the Tourist as realist/empiricist/metaphysician of Presence, and the Theorist as totalising Seer. This is the Nomad, who "renders impertinent" any opposition between rest and motion, between home and travel (13). Invoking Deleuze to insist that the nomad isn't necessarily in-motion but can travel "sur place", Van den Abbeele speculates that nomadic theory would "travel from inauthentic marker to inauthentic marker without feeling the need to possess the authentic sight by totalising the markers into a universal and unmediated vision" (14).

It's a satisfying conclusion. The trouble is that where MacCannell's totalising concept of modernity does allow for a critique of "present" social differentiation and for a disarticulation of Man-in-general itself by modernity's various Others at home and abroad (precisely because Difference is so "apt to be undermined" by the play it attempts to de-limit), Van den Abbeele's philosophically more

sensitive trajectory has the opposite result. It erases social, political and perhaps theoretical conflict altogether.

In "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do With It?", Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty argue that there can be political limitations to "vigilante attacks on humanist beliefs in 'man' and Absolute Knowledge wherever they appear", if these deny the critic's own situatedness in the social, and in an institutional "home."<sup>34</sup>

Something like this has happened in "Sightseers: The Tourist as Theorist" when, at the end of the road, we are ambushed by a figure who, erasing both the domus and difference (therefore becoming, in a sense, auto-genetic), and marking a positive denial of situatedness in the social, might effectively be a model for Postmodern-Man-in-general.

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'Tis Misconception All.

A PHILOSOPHER said, "All the world is mad, I am the  
only sane man in it."

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"'Tis misconception all. The world is mad,  
And I alone am sane." Such the words  
Of England's living sage, he rightly proud  
Of wisdom in the courts of wisdom.

An unit in that full and flowing crowd  
Of miserable maniacs, I, like them,  
Was too intent to win the happiness  
And worth of life, to value high the search

*For possibilities, convertible,  
It might be, to the probable. Too full,  
Within the limits of a biassed mind,  
Of the sweet claims of many clinging friends,  
And the dear wisdom of kind deeds,  
The daily earnestness of common life,  
To yield, unquestioned, that high-voiced demand  
Of all-engrossing sanity. Wise, thought I,  
Mothers who bend o'er the helpless babes;  
And wise the husbandman, who brings  
From God's right hand our daily bread;  
And wise the toiler 'midst the clang  
Of mighty engines for the world's behoof;  
And wise, most humbly wise, the innocent,  
If ignorant, who bend the knee  
And bow the heart to learn of God.  
Thus, tho' yet in love with wisdom, I  
Shrank back with thoughts akin to hate or scorn,  
And called the wise man - egotist.*

*Menie Parkes<sup>35</sup>.*

*(It's a bit hard to like Menie Parkes, although she is the brilliant daughter effaced by the father's Legend. She had a sad life, and found ferocious consolations in religion. She was Parkes' companion and counsellor, made money writing romances, and married a clergyman who soon died in a fall from a horse. Her own book of poetry was printed privately, as a Christmas gift to her father.)<sup>36</sup>*

## Detective/nomad

In "Maps for the Metropolis: a possible guide to the present", Iain Chambers discusses travelling in quite different terms from Georges Van den Abbeele. However, Chambers also suggests a figure of the modern intellectual, though one with more limited scope for movement, and more focussed pursuits, than the Nomad -- the "humble detective".<sup>37</sup>

If the detective himself is humble, he works a grandiose territory. He cruises through everyday life in a place subsuming both the voyage and the domus -- the city or, more accurately, The Metropolis (for Chambers, "the modern world"). Not surprisingly, then, he travels a lot: "A critical intelligence adequate to the fluid complexity of the present is forced to fly regularly", although, eventually, "we also go home" (5).

The privileged metaphor for Chambers' argument is not the voyage but the map. Critical movement is defined not in relation to the temporal "lag" that fascinates Van den Abbeele, but to spatial shifts between "perspectives". There are two major and apparently conflicting ways of mapping the modern world: the overview (the theoretical view from the aeroplane -- rarefied atmosphere, vast generalisation, flat earth as disappearing referent, possible implosion under pressure) and the close-up (the view on the ground -- "down-to-earth" observation, local detail, stubborn and violent materiality of terrain, an overwhelming mess of complexities). A working mediation of these two perspectives is possible,



however, on the "giant screen" of the contemporary city. There, the streaming images of everyday life provide a fluid space of "immediacy" between the extraterrestrial perspectives of postmodernism and the terrestrial prospects of lived popular culture, while maintaining a tension between the two in "the semiotic blur" of the Present.

So where van den Abbeele's deconstruction of the temporal paradoxes of the travel story finally restructures his map of space (no more tour, no more domus), Chambers' mapping of perspectives for remapping space eventually generates a "guide" to time -- the empire of the Now, the Contemporary, the Present.

These two projects diverge in a number of ways which make it difficult for a detective to compare them. One is about tourism, the other about everyday life (though with their discussions of travel and flight, they overlap). One is situated institutionally by literary theory, the other by cultural studies: while one uses the Aristotelian plot as a trope to define its object, the other refers to punk. One situates itself historically by invoking a "global" European tradition (the "metaphorics of the voyage"), the other situates itself in a history of post-war British subcultures. One is an academic reading of a reading, relentlessly contemplative, and so emerges from what Chambers would call "official culture". The other scans a mixture of materials with the casual attention characteristic, for Chambers, of "popular epistemology." (13) Here is another difference: Van den Abbeele's text does not make this kind of

upstairs/downstairs class distinction, and so provides no counter-accusation to situate Chambers' project.

In the casually contemplative spirit fostered by a room in a quiet motel, it's also fair to say that while one is very hard going, the other is an irresistibly amusing read. Both texts are serious, but one is arduous, like homework, the other fun, like a magazine. It's not just a matter of marking different desires for audience. Van den Abbeele does not, and of course cannot, attempt the "theorising without theory" he dreams of for the Nomad. He is searching for the possible, convertible -- it might be -- to the probable. Chambers' detective has no time for postponing the conversion: he writes of the daily earnestness and pleasure of common life, in the now codified pop-theory style that has become a contemporary, informal equivalent of traditional socialist realism.

So it seems in overview. In close-up, there are some interesting points of convergence in the trajectories of the Nomad and the Detective.

Both Van den Abbeele and Chambers establish their topics territorially, by a move of metonymic expansion. For the former, the ordinary tourist as social practitioner becomes The Tourist/Theorist as exemplary interpreter, before being transfigured and redeemed as the Nomad. In Chambers' text, expansion operates at the level of a field of action, rather than that of the actor's competence: postwar British (sub)culture becomes "popular culture" which occupies The Metropolis which becomes co-extensive with "the modern world", and thence with The Present. It's not a bad achievement for

two moves towards affirming a logic of the local, the limited, the partial, the heterogeneous.

At the same time, both texts insist that the point of departure for such expansion anticipates, as well as preceding in practice, its conclusion. Van den Abbeele reclaims MacCannell's thesis of "the tourist's anteriority to the social theorist" (12) in order to make the Tourist pre-figure the Nomad by providing the structure of the dilemma which the latter must displace. Chambers overtly claims that the metropolitan cultures of the last twenty years have "fundamentally anticipated" the "intellectualizing" of postmodernism (6-7). So in each case, it is the terrain of everyday life (lived tourist "theorising", for Van den Abbeele, cultural "mixing" for Chambers) that anticipates a general theoretical program and its actantial "hero" (Nomad, Detective).

That is to say, the social in each case is inscribed as prophetic of the theoretical conclusion to which each of these texts will come. And in each case, that conclusion will assert the displacement of the intellectual as "prophet". As the Nomad displaces the seer, so for Chambers the Detective replaces the intellectual "as a dispenser of the Law and Authority, the Romantic poet-priest-prophet" (20).

At this point, it appears that a point of departure is emerging not from the messy complexity of metropolitan culture or the prophetic space of lived theorising en voyage, but from a bibliography of critical writings from the past twenty years -- a point of departure retrieved as the ambush of conclusion,

recycled, for ritual re-visiting, as a destination inevitable, like the Eiffel Tower, on a tour of present possibilities (or politico-theoretical markers). Like Anne Zahalka's photographer in her series of images "The Tourist as Theorist 1: (theory takes a holiday)",<sup>38</sup> we begin our planning from brochures and conclude with a review of our personalised images of the sights we set out to see.

When "theory takes a holiday", however, the interesting thing is not the reiterations of narrative structure but the re-emergence of a form of personification allegory to articulate that structure. For both Chambers and Van den Abbeele (unlike Zahalka), "Theory" not only becomes the subject of the story of flight and transformation, but divides in the end into two figures. The story is re-motivated for future development by the splitting (and doubling) of Theory into good and bad characters -- the Nomad vs the Seer, the Detective vs the Poet-Priest-Prophet.

In his classic study Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, Angus Fletcher argued that the hero of personification allegory is above all a "generator of other secondary personalities, which are partial aspects of himself."<sup>39</sup> The traveller is a "natural" conceptual hero for such allegory, because he is "plausibly led into numerous fresh situations, where it seems likely that new aspects of himself may be turned up" (36-7). Following this, the tourist would be a likely hero today precisely because he is plausibly led into familiar situations, where old aspects of himself may turn up for renewed recycling. Either way, the point for Fletcher is

that the splitting-off of "chips of composite character" is part of a progressive process of reduction that he calls "daemonic constriction in thematic actions." (38) The Daemons of ancient myth share with allegorical agents, says Fletcher, the characteristic of compartmentalising function. (40)

Thus as the Theorist splits into the Nomad and the Seer, the Intellectual into the Detective and the Poet-Prophet-Priest, two diverging daemonic programs emerge for further adventures by Theory. As the field of action of the hero expands (the nomad universe, the "modern world"), so, correspondingly, his semantic function is reduced, condensed, and sealed off from that of his necessary Alter Ego.

If this is an odd outcome from what starts out in each case as an affirmation of the priority of complex social experience over totalising theoretical activity, it is particularly odd as an outcome for Iain Chambers, for whom "the metaphysical adventure is over" (20). This is the claim that enables his displacement of the metaphors of the voyage with that of the map. If the detective is certainly still an adventurer, he is, as ten thousand screen stories in the naked city have taught us, nothing if not pragmatic about the process of getting results and the places he goes to get them. The mystery in this case is why, if the metaphysical adventure really is over, the streetwise intellectual should begin his practice so strictly positioned in a constitutive opposition to "the Other". Particularly since Chambers, like MacCannell, sees a weak sense of detailed differences (the 'others') replacing singular opposition.

But a binary value-system is probably as indispensable to the rhetoric of populism as the construction of emblematic tableaux of Personae performing the functions that define them is to its social portraiture. Menie Parkes' scenes of mother with child, husbandman with bread, or toiler with engine can easily be read as pre-figurations of Chambers' post-Rasta black Britons with Italian tracksuits, and male gender-benders with falsettos -- with the difference that Parkes' tableau assumes an eternal congruence of person and persona, while populism today predicates its pedagogy on their radical dissociation. In this sense, and in spite of its anti-academic or anti-"official" stance, populism may well be one political trajectory for which the metaphysical adventure can never be over.

One could conclude that if the rhetoric of touristic anti-tourism defines "part of the problem" rather than a critical perspective, then in a comparable way an academic anti-academicism defines not a transformed politics of theory but a "part of the problem". However, this formulation is misleading in that it assumes (like the allegory it analyses) that anywhere and everywhere the problem of "Theory" is the same. Not the least of the little imperialisms performed by these exercises is to place "the modern world" as having-been or still-being under the sway of an intellectual Prophet-Despot who sounds for all the world like an elderly Humanities professor in a venerable but declining European university.

"The problem" for me is the function performed by the figure of The Prophet ("the Other") not in the history of the

world, but in Iain Chambers' argument. Its main role seems to be to eliminate the difficulties raised fleetingly by Chambers as "the relationship between ...the machinery of capital, commerce and industry and ART or CULTURE" (17).

Chambers reasonably points out that these distinctions are highly artificial, promoting complacent myths of critical exteriority to culture, and that the "struggle for sense" occurs inside the powers of the field mutually constructed by "commerce", and (in his example) music. He argues for situating struggle in the complex "immediate mishmash of the everyday", rather than in relation to a singular or "free-floating" first cause. However, in a move which has become common in some versions of cultural studies, Chambers immediately retreats from extending the principle of complexity to the problem of relations between the (global) "machinery of capital" and (local) cultural machinations. Instead of entering the "field" supposedly constructed "mutually" by industry and culture, the former simply drops out of play. Put baldly, the result is that "the immediate mishmash of the everyday" in this account still does not include rapidly changing experiences of the workplace, the home, family life, or mechanisms of State -- because it does not include these as "everyday" at all. Nor does it extend to any flickers of experience of the complexity of relations between high-tech culture and the increasingly internationalised division of labour that Richard Gordon has called the "homework economy."<sup>40</sup>

Instead, as an account primarily based on the emblematic

street experience of un- or under-employed males in European or American cities (or what then becomes its echoes elsewhere), it restricts the scope of inquiry to what may well be, in a grim sense, one of the "growth" areas of that economy, but which does not necessarily thereby serve as a useful synecdoche from which general principles of "culture" in "the modern world" may be composed. Perhaps this is one reason why women, in post-subcultural accounts, still appear in apologetic parentheses or as "catching up" on the streets when they're not left looking out the window.<sup>41</sup> The ways in which the economic and technological changes of "the 1980s" (in Chambers' phrase) transformed women's lives simply cannot be considered -- leaving women not so much neglected as anachronistically mis-placed.

Left as a restricted account of local developments, Chamber's "possible guide" would have a different, more "modest" force. It is the allegorical expansion that gives the lie, like the myth of The Metropolis, to the rhetoric of the local in Chambers' text, and to many accounts of popular culture which read the collapse of old dichotomies (production/consumption, industry/culture) as an occasion for simply effacing the first term and expanding the second along with most of its traditional content -- pleasure, leisure, play, resistance. Yet it is a difficult reading to argue against, if only because the imaginary figure of the Enlightenment Intellectual -- prophet of Truth, poet of Totality, priest of a General Theory and so on -- is still so powerful in debate about culture that the oedipal effort



against him automatically resumes in response to suggestions that relations of production and reproduction, too, are now transformed and transforming in the mishmash of the everyday.

This is precisely how, and why, the figure of the Prophet appears in "Maps for the Metropolis". After raising the question of relations between industry and culture, and stressing the ambiguities and multiplicities of the "mix", Chambers immediately rephrases the issue as one of intellectual "hostility" to popular culture. Like Van den Abbeele reducing the problem of tourism to sympathy for or against, Chambers shrinks (and moralises) any critique of capitalism to "talk of commerce and corruption" (20, my emphasis) -- and discovers that behind intellectual "distaste" for popular culture there is "a deeper drama. A certain intellectual formation is discovering that it is losing its grip on the world".

This seems to me to be a retreat, not least from the possibility of imagining that the "deep" drama of anybody's anxieties today may have more generous and urgent resonances than a fear of loss of "grip" (the Intellectual as Egotist). It is a retreat from the difficulties that follow once criticism of popular culture is already based on complex experiences of taste rather than distaste, of involvement rather than distance, so that a strategic "siding" for or against the 'popular' becomes a pointless manoeuvre. Above all, it is a retreat from asking whether the humanist formation exemplified by the Romantic Prophet has not long ago lost out anyway to that quite different formation which Donna

Haraway calls "the informatics of domination":<sup>42</sup> of which the privileged figure might be (to maintain the allegorical imperative) that exemplary localist, the Stress Management Consultant -- from whose "daemonic" program it is not always so easy to differentiate one's-own as other.

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Installed in the assiduously stress-free environment of a family-theme motel, the Unprotected Female Tourist tidies her papers, stares at other people's children tumbling past the window on their way to the pool, and wonders whether the woman changing the bedclothes was a girl she went to school with. A feminist, she thinks uncomfortably, should really begin her "voyage" from these familiar social markers on the map of everyday life -- rather than by chasing, like some raddled detective, the traces of their effacement from the itineraries of "the others".

But that's the trouble with travel-stories written as Voyages and Maps. They relentlessly generate models of the proper use of place and time -- where to begin, where to go, what to become in between. Among the most prescriptive of genres in the canon of modern realism (including journalism and "speculative fiction"), the travel-story seems strongly resistant to precisely the effort of transformation that "Sightseers: The Tourist as Theorist" and "Maps for the Metropolis" desire to see accomplished.

In Frank Moorhouse's Room Service, a useful counter-text to Shepard's Motel Chronicles, a story called "The Anti-Art of Travel" demonstrates the difficulty of overcoming generic

models of teleological drive. Francois Blase -- a journalist and tourist who likes to "rove the world in an inconclusive state" -- is confronted in the bar of the Albuquerque Holiday Inn by one of literary "others", The Systematic Traveller. In the course of a chat, Blase is harassed by the S.T. for an account of his theory of travel. Blase resists, but cannot avoid altogether the ambush of reaching a conclusion:

'But how do you get a picture of the places you've been to?' the S.T. said, harriedly.

'I don't,' I said glumly, 'I just don't. I can't generalize, that's my problem. I can't wrap up my observations in a dazzling conclusive verbal sachet. After all, travel is a damned expensive way to arrive at inconclusiveness...'⁴³

He hurries on past, however -- eventually to end in mid-sentence, muttering inconclusive comments about Boswell and street crime, to a politely bored bar.

III.

BILLBOARDS.

It was some 180 metres from the site of this Motor Inn on the 24th October 1889 that Sir Henry Parkes whilst Colonial Secretary and Past Member for Tenterfield

*made his famous and historic federation speech
resulting in the formation of the Commonwealth of
Australia.*

*The Sydney Mail of the time
quoted Sir Henry Parkes as
Australia's most far sighted statesman.*

*This Motor Inn is therefore named
The Henry Parkes
In Honour of this great statesman
A man to whom all Australians
should be proudly thankful
For the birth of a nation
In its own right.*

A COLONY FOR A NATION AND A NATION FOR A COLONY.

Restaurant Plaque, Henry Parkes Motor Inn.

There was a legend still circulating in town when I was a child that the Tenterfield Oration was a myth. The Clerk of Petty Sessions, a man then old enough to have witnessed the event as a boy, would swear that Henry Parkes had merely ridden down the main street of Tenterfield, hopped off his horse, relieved himself around the back of the pub, then headed straight out for Sydney.

When locals laughed at the efforts of booster families to mark out their patch as a Place of far-reaching significance,

they made a joke with antecedents. In 1882 Parkes, returning from an exhausting voyage to America, Britain and Europe to face turmoil over land reforms, lost the poll in East Sydney. The candidate for Tenterfield, a Mr Edward Reeves Whereat J.P., immediately stood aside and offered Parkes his seat. Elected unopposed, Parkes was baptised by his opponents "The Member for Whereat".

But the joke wasn't really on the Tenterfield boosters. Making an equation between progress for the town and rhetorical contiguity to a prominent figure, the Tenterfield Star celebrated Parkes' election by noting that it would assure its future as a transit-town: "with regard to the Clarence and New England Railway, the return of Henry Parkes must necessarily make him a firm adherent to the Tenterfield route..."⁴⁴

To be traversed and attract traversals, for far-flung communities dependent on transport for economic survival and growth, was obviously a means to, and not an end of, the process of settling "place". The railway here didn't blur the landscape, but made it visible, legible and livable to whites -- cutting "culture" into the bush.⁴⁵ This dependence, though, is one reason why country towns never really acquired organic "roots", or sentimental "Main Street", connotations in Australian popular culture. The pompositives of civic pride remain defensive against the more powerful mythic pull of the routes for comings and goings.

Whether or not Parkes' "adherence" to the route contributed to Tenterfield's success in becoming a transit-

town, his name was firmly established as a patron saint of passage. In the circular production of "prominence" that organised regional politics long before the arrival of media and regimes of simulation, the Tenterfield landowners, dignitaries and small business families dined out on his story for decades.⁴⁶ Modern tourism finds in their story-telling its basic semiotic strategy.

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In The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau makes an interesting distinction between "place" and "space". A place delimits a field: it is ruled by the law of the "proper", by an orderly contiguity of elements in the location it defines, and as an instantaneous configuration of positions it implies an "indication of stability."<sup>47</sup>

A space is not the substance of a place, but the product of its transformation. It exists only in relation to vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Space "occurs": composed of intersections of mobile elements, it is actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. With none of the univocity or stability of the "proper", it is produced by the operations that make it function in "a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities".

"In short", says de Certeau, "space is a practised place". The street defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers; and in the same way, an act of reading is a space produced by a practice of a written text (a "place constituted by a system of signs").

One useful consequence of this definition is that no

distinction can be made between authentic and "inauthentic" places. At the same time, it avoids any move to pre-determine the kind or the tempo of spatial (reading, walking...) practices deemed "appropriate" to particular places. A written text on a motel wall or restaurant plaque may be spatially practised in ways, in directions and at velocities as various as any street, or literary text. By definition, no one spatial practice can correspond to a "proper" use of place, and there are no exemplary users. Nor is there a simple disjunction between the place and its use as space. For De Certeau, stories act as a means of transportation (metaphorai) in the shuttling that "constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places".

There are two sorts of determinations in stories. One works to found the law of place by the "being-there of something dead" -- a pebble, a cadaver, perhaps the record of a speech. The other works to specify spaces by the actions of historical subjects -- stones, trees, or a political rogue in a hurry. There are passages back and forth between them: for example, in a story of the putting to death, or putting into a landscape, of heroes who have transgressed the law of the place, and make restoration with their tombs (or their epitaphs on motels).

That is, both determinations can be at work in any one legend or story. So the memorialising of events occurring at a site cannot simply be divided into, say, bad petty-bourgeois fabrication (myths of place, sacralisation) and good popular contestation (semiotics of displacement, debunking). As an

activity, memorialising is itself a complex spatial-story practice. Struggles (conflictual programs) occur in the shuttling between stories, and between competing determinations in stories. Thus the rival versions of The Tenterfield Oration -- say, "Call to the Nation" vs "Call of Nature" -- both commemorate a local event and invest a site with meaning, but the second enlivens the first, as well as marking its enshrinement of a something-dead as a socially placed aspiration rather than a "national" event.

This distinction can be useful in dismantling those lingering equations between the place and the domus, displacement and the voyage, which in recent years have made the projects of feminist history so fraught, despite the rhetoric of the local, with general-theoretical anxiety -- particularly since De Certeau's concept of story operates at the level of minute phrases and tiny events as well as larger narrative structures. His insistence that "every story is a travel story -- a spatial practice" (115) refers to sentences, footsteps, or scraps of TV news rather than to vast developmental schemas for ordering and narrating human life.

Thus he differentiates between "tours" and "maps", not in terms of teleological narrative drives in the one case and fixations of the Present in the other, but as competing modalities in a process of narrative description (118-120). In "oral descriptions of places, narrations concerning the home, stories about the streets", for example, indicators of the "map" type ("There is a historic site 180 metres down the road") present tableaux (seeing as "the knowledge of an order



of places") while those of the "tour" type ("You go down to the School of Arts") organise movements (going as "spatializing actions"). In narration, one form may be dominant but be punctuated by the other: tours postulate maps, while maps condition and presuppose tours. It is their combination in a narrative chain of spatializing operations that defines for de Certeau the structure of the travel story: "stories of journeys and actions are marked out by the 'citation' of the places that result from them or authorize them" (120).

The travel story, therefore, does not consist of process contained and directed by origin and destination, nor does it oscillate between "perspectives" on reality. It is itself a movement organised, like any spatial story, between both prospective and retrospective mappings of place, and the practices that transform them.

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Various foundation stories wander around the Henry Parkes (on brochures, cards, and a menu in all the rooms) as well as up and down the streets. The front wall Legend, with its war-memorial lay-out and assertive historical statement, transmutes on a restaurant plaque into the visual form of a poem.

In this text, events are elegaicly distanced by a tourneure of romance. It emphasises the emergence of place in time past ("It was some 180 metres ..." vs "On the 24th October..."), and an archaising syntax creating "history-effect" combines with a proprietorial enunciative trace in a

discourse of obligation ("all Australians should be proudly thankful"). This produces an aura of special importance, like saying grace before the meal. But it also makes the restaurant plaque a declaration of personal commitment rather than a simple touristic seduction.<sup>48</sup>

The plaque has another touch, however, which marks it off from the other stories and yet defines the type of movement that regulates them all.

It ends with a kind of slogan: "a colony for a nation and a nation for a colony." It is a resonant and memorable phrase. But when you stop to think, it doesn't make sense -- or rather, it maps an imaginary place. It works for a world in which New South Wales alone became "Australia", or in which the whole of the Australian continent was occupied by one vast colony. Either way, the whole process of federating six distinct and mutually suspicious colonies into one nation would have been, like the Tenterfield Oration, quite unnecessary.

It could be called a misquotation. The original slogan, attributed to Edmund Barton (later to be first Prime Minister), was "For the first time in history, we have a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation". This production of congruence between natural and political places occurred in a public speech. It begins its course of citation and recitation in Australian historiography not as a text certified by its author but as a reported "memorable impromptu" made at a meeting. In his memoirs, Robert Randolph Garran claimed to have been its first inscriber: it "would

have been unrecorded if I had not happened to write it down."<sup>49</sup>

What matters in this story is not a myth of the primacy of the spoken word, but the movement (in this case, of hearsay) that runs between citings of the text, and that in one place of its migration, a plaque on a dining-room wall, transforms it from place-founding slogan to the "score" of a lilting rhythm -- a trill, a whistle, a jingle, a musical spatial story.

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If you follow the story down the street and go on a tour of the town, several maps of the present and stories of the past begin to intersect. There's discord about it, not just a codified diversity-and-difference.

The School of Arts enshrines the site of Parkes' speech. It's disconcerting to enter with any sense of anticipation, for the inside turns out to be an everyday lending library. As Dean MacCannell points out, the most difficult sights to sacralise are places where something once happened (battles, speech-events) but there's nothing left to see. All that's left here is a lovely but still walked-on original wooden floor.

Down one end, however, there is a roped-off tiny museum of Henry Parkes memorabilia. Apart from a 1915 bust, and a portrait of Parkes in his favourite pose as a late Victorian Moses, most of the objects (wheelbarrow, dog collar, watch) seem to have been collected on the basis of having been touched by Parkes, or persons in his vicinity. They are those

objects most confusing and emotionally opaque to a media sensibility -- genuine relics. But even this image of sanctum is jarred by pieces which seem to have nothing personal to do with Parkes -- a modern book on Georgian Architecture, local histories of distant places, bits of twentieth century pottery with a nationalistic theme. It's a museum dedicated not to the remains of a person, but to an old school of history -- an inventory of unrelated, age-encrusted, national faits divers.

A few blocks away, a rival foundation-place offers something more familiar. It's a show-biz monument -- an old shop restored as the home of the "Tenterfield Saddler." Built in the 1860s, it was created a few years ago from a song by the late Peter Allen, an American-based entertainer, commemorating a family connection. The Saddlery is an impeccable third-order simulacrum: even though the building is now "in its original condition," it reproduces an image of a reality with no previous claim to existence. People treat it respectfully as a forebear of Tenterfield's modernity.

The Centenary Cottage museum tries for something completely different. It has long been in transition between an old house crammed with junk, and a "restored pioneer home". An incipient program is readable: the highway-oriented, universalising pedagogy of simulation hovers as a possibility. But even in the rooms already most organised towards this ideal, the period-effect is overwhelmed by local genealogies. In a clear case of what MacCannell calls "obliteration by the markers", each item is cluttered by the history of its donation: a bed is presented by A, handmade by B from a silky

oak cut on property C located at D in 1881, and restored by Mr and Mrs E. This museum is unreadable to outsiders. It refuses to efface the gestures of labour, ownership, and gift in the manner essential to catching transient interests -- not because it has a deep-rooted, organic sense of "reality" but because it has no idea of its own obscurity. This is a dynastic museum -- a "who's who here" display -- and despite its touristic ambitions it primarily lectures the town.

Nothing much here means anything to me. But in the more disorganised parts of the Cottage, two objects immediately provoke what it is usually called, "nostalgia".

One is in the yard, past an old weighing machine stranded in the grass and some singed looking ferns by a drain. It's an old laundry copper, "historic", but intimately stifling: hot, heavy, stubborn loads of washing to be stirred, stick circling round boiling water, in a misery of blazing heat every endless Saturday morning.

The other is in the chaos of junk inside. Next to a 1921 Income Tax receipt are the "Last Reservation Tickets for the Lyric Theatre". My own first cinema memory rushes up from the 1950s. But it has nothing to do with hurtling through space, zooming through time, or an aesthetics of disappearance.

It's about placement, a memory of anxiety in the picture theatre about where to sit, just the same as in the schoolroom. A tension map of proximities for good little white girls to avoid: town Aborigines (all right, really); white West End louts (worse); and worst, in a front row tacitly off-limits to everyone else, the Aboriginal and white-trash

families from just out of town on The Common.

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If within a few blocks it is possible to tour an archaic mode of pedagogy, a parochial display of current class and caste distinctions, and a piece of postmodern aesthetics, then it is partly because tourism here is as yet barely organised. Apart from National Parks and National Trust (historic buildings) activity, tourism operates as a local response to economic distress.<sup>50</sup> It is also relatively innocuous -- though there's something devastating about the blatancy of a leaflet available round town called The Bluff Rock Massacre. "We punished them severely, and proved our superiority to them", cites the local historian, Ken Halliday, blending geological details of the rock with the tale of a "tribe" being thrown from the top. A more sophisticated tourist operation would obliterate that immediately.<sup>51</sup>

But if their haphazard efforts make country towns eccentric to the global tourist economy, they also suggest a general difficulty in constructing guides to The Present, or theories of the tourist homing instinct. It isn't just that they are obdurately there, waiting in ambush like the suburbs on the edge of the Metropolis, with their own "declarations of reality".<sup>52</sup> It's rather that even in the smallest places, where the production of space involves a limited number of "conflictual programs and contractual proximities", in De Certeau's phrase, the operative simultaneity of programs and proximities makes the effort to take any one as exemplary (either of the Now, or of a "domestication" of history in

myth), only one of the more aggressively territorial programs competing to found its place.

Thousands of miles away, Jean Baudrillard writes in America: "Why should I go and decentralize myself in France, in the ethnic and the local, among the scraps and remains of centrality?"<sup>53</sup> He wants to become ex-centred in the centre of the world. Fair enough. But when he gets there he finds, like a postmodern mystic, the universe in a Burgerking crumb, or a Studebaker, or an empty motel. His America is a "gigantic hologram, in the sense that information concerning the whole is contained in each of its elements" (29). I do know what he means by this. Even in an Australian country town -- a vestige of failed decentralisation rather than a residue of centrality -- I can learn something of All Australia in the Saddlery, or the becoming-Burgerking of the old Greek and Chinese cafes down the road.

But the point about holograms (like simulacra) is that they volatilise, rather than re-place, other models of signifying practice (spatial stories). In fact, a hologram is one of the visual events least able to admit of relations in contiguity: it is defined (in Baudrillard's description) by self-containment. It really doesn't recognise the difficult logic of the next -- hologram here, cinema next door, painting over there -- that activates spaces in contemporary culture and makes philosophies of grounding so difficult to sustain. It is a traffic in negotiable proximities, temporal as well as spatial, between conflicting practices that follows from the decentring of a Renaissance "perspective" on life: -- and not

the restoration of hierarchy by a controlling reference-point that marginalises the "rest".

A motel is a good place to consider the question of traffic, precisely because it is consecrated to proximity and circulation. It is neither the car nor the highway nor the house nor the voyage nor the home, but a space of movements between all of them. It punctuates travelling with resting and being-there with action. It represents neither arrival nor departure, but operates passages from one to the other in the metaphorai of the pause. Motel-time is a syncopation of different speeds in varied degrees of duration.

But it is not an emblematic site, precisely because it only exists transitionally, in any usage, between other possibilities. It provides an operational link not only between practices but between institutions. In countless fictional motels, gangsters, lovers, psychopaths, drifters and defaulters come to motels to be killed, seized, abandoned, or imprisoned as well as to hide, to escape, to recover -- in transit between many kinds of prison, and many attempts at release. So despite its resonance for highway romance, the motel may always, in the end, affirm the being-there of the place and the modalities of the map -- but it creates the possibility of the tour.

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Recently, Lawrence Grossberg has used the model of the roadside billboard to pose problems about interpreting events in popular culture and the politics of everyday life.<sup>54</sup>

Billboards for Grossberg are "markers" (neither authentic



nor inauthentic) that are there to be driven-by. They don't tell us where we are going, but yet they mark, and comprise, boundaries; they are the outside, inside and the limits of the town that they announce, and that we are passing through. They advertise, yet we drive past without paying attention to what they say because we already know, or because it doesn't matter. Yet they do tell us what road we are on, and they reaffirm that we are actually moving. They are not there to be interpreted or "read"; yet they are a space in which many different discourses appear, so they are sites of struggle. But any individual billboard is in-different. It is "neither built upon a radical sense of textual difference, nor does it erase all difference." (32)

So Grossberg suggests that interpreting the politics and effects of popular culture is less like reading a book than like driving by billboards -- not because the street is the only reality, but because billboards belong simultaneously to the orders of local detail and national structure, and connect to places off the road (factories, gaols, houses...). Billboards are also like the bric-a-brac in Centenary Cottage -- apparently meaningless "signposts" which, for all the irrelevance and seeming uselessness of their specific inscriptions, become sites of investment and empowerment (not necessarily benevolent). For Grossberg, such signposts make it possible to continue struggling to make a difference, by devising "mattering maps".

So if billboards are dominated (unlike the motel) by the operationality of space and the modality of the tour, by

"going" rather than "seeing", they enable in turn the making of maps, the citing and seeing of places.

This image is all the more useful if we remember that as well as driving by billboards anywhere, people sometimes stop near particular billboards somewhere; people live near them, photograph them, picnic and read books beside them, deface them or even, near Tenterfield, shoot at them.

For most of the 1980s, the limits of Tenterfield were marked on the three main roads by National (The Big Entertainer) billboards. They ringed the town with images of Peter Allen at the piano, declaring that he "Still Called Australia Home", and that Tenterfield was the Home of the Tenterfield Saddler. These routine, concentric productions of Place from the figure of Allen (Saddler/Tenterfield/Australia) were in perfect conformity with the older myth of Henry Parkes (Motel/Tenterfield/Australia). In 1987 they were replaced by billboards advertising a nearby natural wonder, Bald Rock (Australia's Largest Granite Rock) -- each separately handpainted in the perfect image of its postcard by two women artists from Tenterfield. For a while, at least, these three serialised "individual" billboards will figure on local mattering maps -- not as in-different signposts enabling the making of difference, but as signs (for those to whom it matters) of a difference made. That they may revert, in time, to in-difference makes no difference to the spatial story.

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Once out at the billboards, the tourist could go home to the Henry Parkes motel, home to her mother's place nearby, or

head home on the road to Sydney. Each ending might define a different kind of domesticity: formalist (return to first principles), feminist (return to a maternal space) or postmodernist (Blase admits the transience of her interest in small towns, and reclaims her intellectual mobility). All of these resolutions might be perfectly realistic.

In any case, I can leave still thinking about Henry Parkes, of whom I've had very little to say. My interest has been in the disjunctions between, on the one hand, the rhetorics of movement, displacement and rapidity in debates about popular genres of cultural practice (touring, home-making, mapping, detecting), and, on the other, the feminist insistence on recognising place and variable pace in everyday life. If so, it is because there is a particular stake for feminism in the awkward relations between them.

The problem might be summed up by Prato and Traverro's claim in "The Spectacle of Travel" that transport ceased to be a metaphor of Progress when mobility came to characterise everyday life more than the image of "home and family"; transport became, instead, "the primary activity of existence."⁵⁵ Feminism has no need whatsoever to claim the history of home-and-family as its special preserve, but it does imply a degree of discretion about proclaiming its marginalisation.

It is important to remember that in Australia, as in many places, the mobility/domus distinction is at best historically doubtful. In settler and immigrant societies, it is mobility as a means of endlessly making prospects (or

"progress") for home-and-family that becomes, for many people, the primary activity of existence. As the prior condition of such progress, colonisation is precisely a mode of movement, practised as an occupation of other people's homelands as well as a destruction of their families and homes, that transgresses limits and borders. In and after colonialism, a European voyage/domus distinction loses its oppositional structure -- and thus its value for announcing the displacement of one by the other in the course of Human History.

Yet the sort of claim being made by Prato and Traverro does not seek its grounding in historical "truth", even the truth of approximation, and thus makes feminist criticism more difficult. It is meant, perhaps, to be a billboard, a marker in a certain landscape. It marks a recognisable trajectory along which it becomes possible not only for some to think of their lives as a trip on a "road to nowhere" (etc...),⁵⁶ but for others to think of home-and-family as a comfortable, "empowering" vehicle.

So rather than retreating to the invidious position of trying to contradict a billboard, feminist criticism might make its own. I have two in mind, two textual places that might be transformed by a shuttle between them producing a spatial story. As individual billboards, they don't tell me anything in particular -- not how to read the history of families, tourism, or Australian politics, and certainly not how to read the relations between cultural change and the persistent vagrancy of clichés. But together, they mark out

space for considering convergence and overlap, rather than divergence and distinction, between the rhetoric of mobility and the politics of placement, the mapping of the voyage and the "metaphorics of home".

One is a quotation from Henry Parkes -- self-made man, traveller, family man, Premier, moderniser, philosopher and Father of Federation -- who spoke of the political reforms of the 1860s in these terms:

*Our business being to colonize the country, there was only one way to do it -- by spreading over it all the associations and connections of family life.*⁵⁷

The other is a media anecdote from the Sydney Morning Herald in 1987 entitled "Great Moments in Philosophy."⁵⁸ Federal Treasurer Paul Keating -- self-made man, traveller, family man, future Prime Minister, moderniser, philosopher, republican -- refuted accusations that he was using his travelling allowance to purchase antique clocks. Asked why he claimed travel refunds when he lived in Canberra with his home-and-family, he replied on the steps of Parliament House:

We are wayfarers on one long road. Mere wayfarers.

NOTES to Chapter One

1. Henry Parkes (1815-1896) came with his wife to Australia from Birmingham, England, as an assisted immigrant in 1838-39. He was a penniless artisan, and despite several efforts at business in Australia he spent much of his life on and over the edge of bankruptcy. He had belonged to the Birmingham Mechanics' Institute and was influenced by the early phases of Chartism. As his biographer points out, the timing of his emigration left him "for good, a Birmingham man of 1832 rather than of 1839: a radical, but dedicated to middle and working class co-operation as the key to reform and progress"; A.W. Martin, Henry Parkes (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), 17. Parkes married three times, and fathered the last of 17 children at the age of 77. During a political career which lasted from 1848 till his death, he was five times Premier of NSW -- presiding over the implementation of most of the ideals he had arrived with, as well as of a pro-white, pro-Anglican (anti-"coloured", anti-Catholic) vision of Australia's destiny. He ended in the 1890s as an arch-conservative, utterly baffled by the Labor Party.

Needless to say, Parkes's 1889 speech in Tenterfield did not "cause" Australian Federation; his reasons for making it seem to have been at least partly opportunistic, and the speech itself had at best a symbolic effect in galvanising public interest in the matter, particularly in New South Wales. However it is still invoked as a precedent by reformers hoping to popularise their programs for constitutional change; for example, Kenneth Wiltshire, Tenterfield Revisited: Reforming Australia's System of Government for 2001 (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1991). In this usage, as in mine, the figure of Parkes works as a motto, or an emblem, rather than an object of historical study.

2. Anthony Trollope, Travelling Sketches (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), 29-42.

3. John Urry in The Tourist Gaze (London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), 70, provides a useful account of consumer service as "emotional work".

4. On this association in Australian colonial culture, see Sue Rowley, "The journey's end: women's mobility and confinement", Australian Cultural History 10 (1991), 69-83.

5. Iain Chambers, Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience (London and New York: Methuen, 1986) 12-13. Further references in parentheses in the text. It is unclear in Chambers's model how a sign is rendered "individual" or attention "isolated". On the problem of theorising attention in cultural analysis, see Paul Willemsen, Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory (London and Bloomington: BFI and Indiana University Press, 1994), 27-55.

6. Georges Van den Abbeele, "Sightseers: the Tourist as Theorist", Diacritics Vol. 10, December 1980, 13. Further references in parentheses in the text.
7. Dean MacCannell, The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: Schocken, 1976). Further references in parentheses in the text. On the concept of "marker", see Jonathan Culler, "Semiotics of Tourism", The American Journal of Semiotics, 1.1/2 (1981): 127-40.
8. M. M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).
9. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, Learning From Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), 34-35.
10. Daniel Boorstin, The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1961).
11. "Places are odd and call for interpretation... Pseudo-places entice by their familiarity and call for instant recognition." Paul Fussell, Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 43.
12. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" in Simulations (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 1-79. Baudrillard acknowledges his reading of Boorstin in La société de consommation (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).
13. Paolo Prato and Gianluca Trivero, "The Spectacle of Travel", The Australian Journal of Cultural Studies 3.2 (December 1985), 27.
14. Paul Virilio, "Véhiculaire", in Cause commune: Nomades et vagabonds (Paris: U.G.E. 10/18), 1975, 52. My translation. On the concept of "non-place", see Marc Augé, Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995).
15. Richard Sieburth, "Sentimental Travelling: On the Road (and Off the Wall) with Laurence Sterne", Scripta 4.3, 203.
16. Stories of early or "primitive" audiences fleeing the train rushing towards them on screen are foundational in cinema mythology. However in both Virilio's Esthétique de la disparition (Paris: Balland, 1980) and Baudrillard's America (London: Verso, 1988), the connection between rapid transport and the perceptual shifts effected by cinema is developed in terms of disappearance. For Virilio (concerned with movement in the history of militarisation rather than tourism), the invention of the camera is also associated with the chrono-photographic rifle, and the Gatling gun: Pure War (New York:

Semiotext(e), 1983), 82-83; War and Cinema (London: Verso, 1989); The Vision Machine (London and Bloomington: BFI and Indiana University Press, 1994).

17. Virilio, Speed and Politics, 8-9. Virilio's term is actually "implantation", not "installation". He argues that the strategic implantation of the fixed domicile is more important to the historical formation of bourgeois power than commerce or industrialism.

18. Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, Learning from Las Vegas, 34-35.

19. See Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity 1984), 122-126, and MacCannell, The Tourist, 91-102.

20. In the broader context of the hospitality industry, the Henry Parkes was an early exemplar of the "guest-house" revival that gave rise to the concept of the "boutique" hotel or theme-motel.

21. See Ken Halliday, Call of the Highlands: The Tenterfield Story 1828-1988 (Tenterfield Shire Council and Australian Bicentenary Authority, 1988), 1-2, and the entries for Bundjalung [Jukambal], Ngarabal, Nganyaywana and Southeast Region in The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994).

22. See C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia, vol. V, The People Make Laws 1888-1915 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981); Martin, Henry Parkes; and, on country towns and progress, Donald Horne, Money Made Us, (Penguin Books, 1976).

23. Parkes's "crimson thread of kinship" model of cohesion retains some currency in celebrations of an Australian national familialism based not on the racially exclusive consanguinity prized by Parkes but on an "affinity" created by immigration, intermarriage and shared labour. See Geoffrey Blainey's Foreword to E. Lloyd Sommerlad, The Migrant Shepherd: Ober-Rosbach to Tenterfield (Avalon Beach: Clareville Press, 1986), vii; and Wiltshire, 46.

24. John Robertson and Charles Cowper, factional leaders in the New South Wales parliament. Nineteenth century colonial politics was not organised by a party system but around vying personalities.

25. Henry Parkes, Studies in Rhyme (Sydney: J. Ferguson, 1870).

26. For other readings of MacCannell, see John Frow, "Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia", October 57 (1991): 123-51, and Urry, 8-15.

27. This is one of the ways in which a hierarchical distinction between "travelling" and "tourism" is frequently maintained. In Jean Baudrillard's America (London: Verso, 1988), "nothing is further from pure travelling than tourism or holiday travel" (9); the tourist, not the traveller, is the archaic figure for Baudrillard, precisely because of the presumed touristic quest for meaning, reason, and reality. For a critique of this presumption, see Urry, 100-102.

28. Sam Shepard, Motel Chronicles (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982), 102.

29. See Angelika Bammer's editorial on the complexities of "home ... as a moveable concept" in the special issue of New Formations, 17 (Summer 1992), "The Question of Home."

30. Neither writer pays much attention to the "work" of the leisure industry, or considers domestic labour in relation to either industrial or "post-industrial" production. Doing so might have made the industrial/post-industrial line more difficult to draw. Instead, domestic labour is simply subsumed, in these analyses, by the shift from "work" to "leisure".

31. See also MacCannell's Empty Meeting Grounds: The tourist papers (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 87-113.

32. An example of the political complexity of tourism is the way in which after the 1987 military coup in Fiji efforts at economic protest on behalf of the elected government of Dr Timoci Bavadra were undermined by the introduction of cut-price airfares from Australia. It is hard to say to what extent touristic imperviousness to a coup in a nearby country does count as a danger to Australian "integrity".

33. Placing this issue at the level of national encounters also obscures the way that locally destructive tourist developments can be justified as good for the "integrity" of a "national" (home) economy. See Jennifer Craik, Resorting to Tourism: Cultural Policies for Tourist Development in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).

34. Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do With It?", Feminist Studies/Critical Studies ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986), 193-194.

35. Menie Parkes, Poems, Printed For Private Circulation (Sydney: F. Cunninghame, 1867), 15.

36. A.W. Martin, ed., Letters from Menie: Sir Henry Parkes and His Daughter (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983).

37. Iain Chambers, "Maps for the Metropolis: a possible guide to the present", Cultural Studies 1.1 (Jan. 1987), 1-21. Further references in parentheses in the text.

38. Anne Zahalka, "The Tourist as Theorist 1: (theory takes a holiday)", Cultural Studies 2.1 (January 1987), 17-28.

39. Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1964), 35. Further references in parentheses in the text.

40. Cited in Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991), 166.

41. See Angela McRobbie, "Settling Accounts with Subcultures", Screen Education 34 (Spring 1980), 37-49. On women at windows, see Dick Hebdige, "The Impossible object. Towards a sociology of the sublime", New Formations 1 (Spring 1987), 47-76.

42. Haraway, 161.

43. Frank Moorhouse, Room Service: Comic Writings of Frank Moorhouse (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 52.

44. 6 December 1882. Cited in Norman Crawford, Tenterfield (Tenterfield District Historical Society, 1949), np.

45. As recently as 1988, a sense of the railway's importance to pioneering suffuses Ken Halliday's celebratory local history, Call of the Highlands. Although passenger trains no longer arrive in Tenterfield, the chapter on the "Coming of the Railway" is one of the longest in the book.

46. See Halliday on "The Federation Speech", 40-3, and Sommerlad, 109.

47. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984), 117f. Further references in parentheses in the text.

48. The motel was built by a couple whose family had known Henry Parkes in his heyday, but before he was knighted. So the motel is named simply the Henry Parkes in order to represent appropriately the nature of the family connection.

49. R.R. Garran, Prosper the Commonwealth (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1958), 101.

50. Like many country towns, Tenterfield, faced simultaneously with decline in agriculture, sensitivity in the timber industry and closure of the local meatworks, talked in the 1970s about the possibility of its own extinction. Natural

and historical "resources" began to be mapped for a semiotics of attraction. If the highway brings fewer commercial transports in search of wood and meat, it does bring some urban transients in search of trees, animals, fresh air and the homes of pioneers. Nevertheless, many residents depend on welfare to survive.

51. The Bluff Rock massacre was duly ignored in Halliday's subsequent Bicentenary history, Call of the Highlands. At the same time, Halliday's effort at including two pages on "The First Inhabitants" at the beginning of this book is symptomatic of the changes introduced to the "pioneer" mode of historiography by Aboriginal activism leading up to the Bicentenary. During this period, too, local histories began to recognise Chinese (Halliday, 32; Sommerlad, 49-50), German (Halliday, 30, Sommerlad, passim) and unspecified "non-English speaking" (Halliday, 144) aspects of pioneering; an important precedent was set by Glen Hall's history of the adjoining Clarence River district, The Road to the River (1839-1939) (Lismore: Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education, 1975), 52-3, 72-7, 82. A major popular history of Chinese pioneering that refers to the Tenterfield district appeared in 1992; Eric Rolls, Sojourners: Flowers and the Wide Sea (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992).

52. Donald Horne, The Great Museum: The Re-Presentation of History (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), 1.

53. Baudrillard, America, 28. Translation modified.

54. Lawrence Grossberg, "The In-difference of Television", Screen, 28.2 (Spring 1987), 28-45. Further references in parentheses in the text. See also "Putting the Pop Back Into Postmodernism", in Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism ed. Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 167-190, and We gotta get out of this place: popular conservatism and postmodern culture (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

55. Prato and Trivero, 40.

56. See Dick Hebdige, "Post-script 4: Learning to Live on the Road to Nowhere", Hiding in the Light (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 233-44.

57. N.S.W. Legislative Assembly, 14 August 1866. Cited in Stephen Murray-Smith, ed., The Dictionary of Australian Quotations (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1984), 211.

58. "Great Moments in Philosophy", Sydney Morning Herald 30 June 1987.

Chapter Two

THINGS TO DO WITH SHOPPING CENTRES.

The story of everyday practice begins, says Michel de Certeau, "on ground level, with footsteps".¹ To come down from an urban tower and walk away from the panorama-city is to walk again into time and eventfulness, action and eccentricity, the space of anecdote and discrete locales. In the infinite diversity of ways in which pedestrians operate their city-system, de Certeau finds resistances that elude but inhabit the disciplined field of spectacular space. Like speaking, walking is a referential activity; with every step, the walker creates a near and a far (a here and a there, a now and a then), predicating worlds of mobile positions and relations. At least, this is one interpretation of the analogy. De Certeau himself prefers to highlight the contact-oriented aspects of walking, those that set up, maintain or interrupt material flows of communication, like "hello", "well, well" or "hmmm" in speech: "walking, which alternately follows a path and has followers, creates a mobile organicity in the environment, a sequence of phatic topoi" (99).

The analytical force of this schema weakens, however, with distance from the base of the tower and the crowded streets around it. De Certeau's descent from observation deck to footpath creates a volatile drama of "up" and "down", system and process, planning and living, theory and practice, synchrony and history. To keep on walking, however, is to

find, in Australian urban contexts, the tower and the busy street merging, back there, in the singular vagueness of "town"; and to travel away from town (in disciplined terms, the Central Business District or CBD) is to head towards zones of vastness and sparseness where space is neither panoptic nor intimately pedestrian in organisation. As Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour have insisted,² suburban space is automobile space; in the car-zones "up" and "down" are less distinctively "practices" of space than relative moments along a trajectory.

It follows that the spatial distribution of functions supporting de Certeau's city (looking/moving, observing/doing, mapping/operating) cannot easily be used to segment suburbia, still less the patchy straggle of an Australian country town, in terms of theories here, stories there, structure here, history there -- even if we aim to follow de Certeau by asking how theories and stories may interact in practice. Another approach is needed here, in order to interpret the differences between apparently similar sites; one of the most persistent myths of Australian "suburbanality"³ projects a bland continuum of interchangeable allotments, each reproducing the cultural whole of which it is a part. If a regional shopping centre is not the "other" of the urban tower (any more than down-to-earth living is the other of an urban planner's dreams), neither is it simply a self-identical form repeated endlessly in various towns and suburbs as though the latter had no history that might modify the uses of the form.

Footsteps, however, may still be a way to start. In comparison with the US freeway-billboard spaces described by

Venturi and his associates, Australian towns and suburbs often preserve the habit of walking and treat it with some respect. Nevertheless, there is a hierarchy -- as any vulnerable pedestrian knows. The pedestrian abroad in the sparse landscapes beyond the city-centre is not so much out of scale as out of place in an environment where roads link specialised exercise-enclosures (home, backyard, pool, gym, tennis court, all-purpose oval, supermarket) with the drive-in bottle shops, pubs and liquor barns that fuel potentially predatory cars.

For any female, black, queer, foreign, "funny-looking" or plain unlucky pedestrian, de Certeau's phatic aspect of walking gains an uncomfortable intensity here. The tactics of inviting and above all avoiding "followers", as he puts it, are basic to the art of communication across suburban space. There is the hitch-hiker, attempting not only to appear a desirable passenger across a rapidly decreasing distance to an approaching car, but to be desirable in the right way to the desired kind of driver. Here, in contrast, is the walker striding along, head down, posture repellent, on the wrong side of the road for an easy lift, hoping to deflect the attention of hostile passing cars. While walking for pleasure or convenience in this landscape is a risky practice, it is most acceptable when phrased (by wearing, say, a track-suit) as "cardiovascular".

Yet if the history of suburban space is to some extent a history of the displacement of pedestrians, then walking, because of its tense, disproportionate relationship to suburban cultural forms, is a useful way to think about how to

do something, as a feminist critic, with those forms. Away from "town", walking is understood as slow motion, and the awkwardness of a leisurely pace may help a critic -- struggling to read the huge signs fashioned for faster-moving eyes than her own -- to stumble over details lying in a landscape like litter beside the billboards, or the abandoned shopping trolleys sprawling in a culvert, bedecked with flowers and cans.

Managing Change

The first thing I want to do is cite a definition of modernity. It comes not from debates in feminist theory or cultural studies, but from a paper on "development in the retail scene" given in Perth in 1981 by John Lennen of Myer Shopping Centres. To begin his address to a seminar organised by the Australian Institute of Urban Studies, Lennen told this fable:

As Adam and Eve were leaving the Garden of Eden,
Adam turned to Eve and said, "Do not be distressed
my dear, we live in times of change."⁴

After quoting Adam, Lennen went on to say, "Cities live in times of change. We must not be discouraged by change, but rather we must learn to manage change". He meant that the role of shopping centres was changing from what it had been in the 1970s, and that retailers left struggling with the

consequences -- planning restrictions, post-boom economic conditions, new forms of competition -- should not be discouraged, but should change their practices accordingly.

I want to discuss some issues for feminist criticism that have emerged in a study of the management of change in places involving practices regularly, if not exclusively, carried out by women -- shopping, driving, the organisation of leisure, holiday and/or unemployment activities. My discussion has a theme; I am critical of the "Edenic" allegories of consumerism in general, and of shopping centres in particular, used in a number of different discourses and institutional "sites" to analyse those practices. However, my argument takes the form of a rambling response to three questions that I've often been asked by women with whom I've discussed this study.

One of these is very general: "what's feminist about it?" I can never answer this question in a direct or immediate way; for me, "feminism" is not a set of approved concerns and methods, a kind of planning code, against which one can measure one's own interests and aspirations. To be frank, it's a question that I find almost unintelligible. While I do understand the polemical and sometimes theoretical value of arguing that something is not feminist, to demand a prefatory definition of feminism seems to me to make the very idea of a "project", uncertain and unsettled, impossible. So I take this question as an invitation to make up answers as I go; in other words, the answer to "what's feminist about it?" has to be, "I don't know yet".

The other two questions are more specific, and relate

particularly to shopping centres.

Difference and identity

One question is asked almost invariably by academic women with whom I've discussed the topic of shopping. They say: "Yes, you do semiotics ... are you looking at how shopping centres are all the same everywhere? laid out systematically, everyone can read them?" They don't ask about shopping centres and change, or about a semiotics of the management of change.

In fact, my emphasis is rather the opposite. It is true that at one level of analysis (and of our "practice" of shopping centres) lay-out and design principles try to ensure that all centres are minimally readable to anyone literate in their use. This "readability" may be minimal indeed: many centres operate a strategy of alternating surprise and confusion with familiarity and harmony, and in different parts of any one centre, clarity and opacity will occur in different degrees of intensity for different users. To a newcomer, for example, the major supermarket in an unfamiliar centre is usually more difficult to read than the spatial relations between the specialty food shops and the boutiques. Nevertheless, there are always some basic rules of contiguity and association at work to assist you to make a selection of shops, as well as products.

However I am more interested in a study that differentiates particular shopping centres. Differentiating shopping centres means, among other things, looking at how

they produce and maintain what Neville Quarry calls, in an appreciation of one effort, "a unique sense of place" -- in other terms, a myth of identity.⁵ I see this as a feminist project because it requires the predication of a more complex and localised affective relation to shopping spaces, and to their links with other sites of domestic and familial labour, than does the scenario of the cruising grammarian reading similarity from place to place. In one way, all shoppers may be cruising grammarians. I do not need to deny this, however, in order to choose to concentrate instead on the ways that particular centres strive to become "special", for better or for worse, in the everyday lives of women in local communities.⁶ Men, of course, may have this relation to a shopping centre too. So my "feminism" at this stage is defined in non-polemical and non-exclusive terms.

Obviously, shopping centres produce a sense of place for economic, "come-hither" reasons, and sometimes because the architects and planners involved may be committed, these days, to an aesthetics or even a politics of the local. But we cannot derive commentary on their function, people's responses to them, or their own cultural production of "place" in and around them, from this economic rationale. Besides, shopping-centre identities are not fixed, consistent or permanent. Shopping centres do get face-lifts, and change their image -- increasingly so as the great classic structures in any region begin to age, fade, and date.

But the cost of renovating them, especially the larger ones, means that the identity-effect produced by any one

centre's spatial play in time is not only complex, highly nuanced and variable in detail, but also simple, massive and relatively enduring overall, and over time, in space. At every possible level of analysis -- and there are many indeed with such a diverse and continuous social event -- shopping centres are overwhelmingly and constitutively paradoxical. This is one of the things that makes it hard to differentiate them. On the one hand, they seem so monolithically Present -- solid, monumental, rigidly and indisputably on the landscape, and in our lives. On the other hand, when you try to dispute with them, they dissolve at any one point into a fluidity and indeterminacy that might suit any philosopher's delirium of an abstract femininity. This is partly because the shopping centre "experience" at any one point includes the experience of crowds of people (or of their relative absence), and so of all the varied responses and uses that the centre provokes and contains.

To complicate matters, this dual quality is very much a part of shopping centre strategies of appeal, their "seductiveness", and also of their management of change. The stirring tension between the massive stability of the structure, and the continually shifting, ceaseless spectacle within and around the "centre", is one of the things that people who like shopping centres really love about shopping centres. At the same time, shopping centre management methods (and contracts) are very much directed towards organising and unifying -- at the level of administrative control, if not of achieved aesthetic effect -- as much of this spectacle as

possible by regulating tenant mix, signing and advertising styles, common space decor, festivities, and so on. This does not mean, however, that they succeed in "managing" either the total spectacle (which includes what people do with what they provide) or the responses it provokes (and may include).

So the task of analysing shopping centres partly involves, on the one hand, exploring common sensations, perceptions and emotional states aroused by them (which can, of course, be negative as well as delirious), and, on the other hand, fending off those perceptions and states in order to make a space from which to speak other than that of the fascinated describer -- either standing "outside" the spectacle qua ethnographer, or, in a pose which seems to me to amount to much the same thing, ostentatiously absorbed in her own absorption in it qua celebrant of popular culture.

If the former mode of description may be found in much sociology of consumerism or leisure, the latter mode is more common in cultural studies and it has its persuasive defenders. Iain Chambers, for example, has argued strongly that in order to appreciate the democratic potential of the way that people live through, not "alongside", culture, appropriating and transforming everyday life, we must first pursue the "wide-eyed presentation of actualities" that Adorno disapproved in some of Benjamin's work on Baudelaire.⁷ I do not disagree with this as a general orientation. But if we look closely at the terms of Adorno's objection, it is possible to read into them a description of shopping centre mystique: "your study is located at the crossroads of magic

and positivism. That spot is bewitched."⁸ With a confidence that feminist philosophers have taught us to question, Adorno continues that "Only theory could break the spell..." (although in context, he means Benjamin's theoretical practice, not a force of theory-in-general).

In my view, neither a strategy of "wide-eyed presentation" nor a faith in theory as *The Exorcist* is adequate to dealing with the problems posed for feminism by the analysis of everyday life. If we locate our own study at that "crossroads of magic and positivism" to be found in the grand central court of any large regional mall, then social experiences more complex than wonder or bewitchment are certain to occur -- and to elicit, for a feminist, a more critical response than "presentation" requires. If it is today fairly easy to reject the philosophical mythology implied by Adorno's scenario (theory breaking the witch's spell), and if it is also easy to refuse critiques of "consumption" as false consciousness (bewitchment by the mall), then it is perhaps not so easy at the moment also to question the "wide-eyed" pose of critical amazement at the performance of the everyday.

At the very least, a feminist analysis of shopping centres will insist initially upon ambivalence about its objects rather than a simple astonishment before them. Ambivalence allows a thinking of relations between contradictory states: it is also a "pose", no doubt, but one that is probably more appropriate to an everyday practice of using the same shopping centres often, and for different reasons, rather than visiting several occasionally, just in

order to see the sights.⁹ Above all, ambivalence does not eliminate the moment of everyday discontent -- of anger, frustration, sorrow, irritation, hatred, boredom, fatigue. Feminism is minimally a movement of discontent with "the everyday", and with wide-eyed definitions of the everyday as "the way things are". While feminism too may proceed by "staring hard at the realities of the contemporary world we all inhabit", as Chambers puts it, feminism also allows the possibility of rejecting what we see, and refusing to take it as given. Like effective shopping, feminist criticism includes moments of sharpened focus, narrowed gaze, sceptical assessment. This is a more polemical sense in which I shall consider this project to be feminist in the context of cultural studies.

The Ordinary Woman

Feminist theory has now produced a great many tools for any critical study of identity and difference, and of place in everyday life.¹⁰ Using these in shopping centres, however, I encounter a difficulty, or an awkwardness, a rhetorical one this time, with resonances of interdisciplinary conflict; the difficulty of what can seem to be a lack, or lapse, of appropriateness between my discourse as feminist intellectual, and my objects of study.

To put it bluntly: isn't there something really off about using the tools of an elite, possibly still fashionable but definitely un-popular theoretical discourse to examine a

major element in the lived culture of "ordinary women", to whom that discourse might be as irrelevant as the stray copy of a book by Roland Barthes I once saw decorating a simulated yuppie apartment on display at Canberra's FREEDOM furniture showroom?. And wouldn't that discourse be "off" in a way that it isn't off to use them to re-read Gertrude Stein or other women modernists, or to rewrite devalued and non-modernist writings by women so that they may be used to revise existing concepts of the literary canon?

Of course, these are not questions that any academic, even feminist, is obliged to answer. One can simply define one's object strategically, in the limited way most appropriate to a determined disciplinary and institutional context. They are also questions impossible to answer without challenging their terms; by pointing out, for example, that both relevance and appropriateness depend, insofar as they can be calculated at all, as much on the "from where" and the "to whom" of any discourse as on relationships to an "about". During my research, I have found the pertinence or even the good taste of using a vocabulary derived from semiotics to discuss "ordinary women's lives" questioned more severely by sociologists and historians than by non-academic (I do not say, "ordinary") women -- who have been variously curious, indifferent, or amused.

Nevertheless, these are questions that feminist intellectuals do ask each other, and we will no doubt continue to do so as long as we retain some sense of a wider social context, and political import, for our work. So I want to

suggest the beginnings of an answer by going back to basics and questioning the function of the "ordinary woman" as a figure in our polemics. It is a truism that as a feminist I cannot wish the image, or the reality, of other women away. It is also a truism that a semiotician must notice that "images" of other women -- such as the one I've just produced of "sociologists and historians" -- are, in fact, images.

Let me bring these truisms to bear on a visual image (fig. 1) of an ordinary woman walking through a shopping centre. Some image like this is perhaps what many of us have in mind when we talk about the social gap between a feminist critic's discourse on shopping centres and her "object of study". This image was originally published in an Australian government report on The Shopping Centre As a Community Leisure Resource¹¹. It was, in fact, taken without its subject's knowledge or consent by a sociological surveillance camera at Sydney's Blacktown Westpoint shopping centre in 1977 or 1978. Framed as a still image, it proclaims its realist status: the candid-camera effect of capturing an iconic moment of spontaneity and joy is reinforced by bits of accessory reality protruding casually into the frame (stroller, vertical section of a "companion").

These details help us to imagine that we know what is happening here: a young mother is strolling the mall, enjoying herself in its ambience and sharing her pleasure with a friend. Unnamed and socially abstracted except for her maternity (for this is an icon of Woman as reproducer of consumption), she is made representative of the leisure-



Fig. 1
Mother and child at Blacktown Westpoint, 1977 or 1978
Source: The Shopping Centre As A Community Leisure Resource.
Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978.

resource potential of "the" shopping centre for indeterminately working class women. "The shopping centre", too, is abstracted as representative, since all we see of it here is the speckled floor to be found, twenty years ago, in any downmarket centre anywhere. But of course, we only know what is happening in the image. We don't know where she came from, what her background might be, how (or if) she would describe her class or her ethnicity. We don't know why she is there, what she is laughing at, how she felt about her companion or the child (is it really hers?) at that instant, what her expression was like two seconds before and after the moment she passed the camera, or what her ideas on that day about shopping centres, or Blacktown Westpoint in particular, might have been.

This image of an ordinary woman, then, is not a glimpse of her reality, but a polemical declaration about reality mobilised between the authors (or better, the authority) of a governmental report and its readership. I can deduce little about that woman at Blacktown, let alone about "women" in "shopping centres", from it. Nor can I pretend that my discourse, my camera or even my questionnaire, if I had the real woman here to talk to now, would give me unmediated access to her thoughts and feelings about shopping at Blacktown Westpoint twenty years ago, or now. In other words, I cannot look through this image of a woman to my imaginary Ordinary Woman and ask of her -- "what does shopping woman want?".

One possible step away from being "off", then, would be

to construct my initial object of study as neither "that woman", nor even her image, but rather the institutional image of shopping-woman framed as illustration to the sociological text (fig.2).

The study of shopping centres today is necessarily involved in a history of the positioning of women as objects of knowledges, indeed as targets for the manoeuvres of retailers, planners, developers, sociologists, market researchers and so on. A lot of research is now available now about that, especially in relation to fashion and the history of department stores; and there is research, too, about how the target moves, the object evades: this is the study of women's resistance, action, creativity and cultural production understood as the transformation of imposed constraints.¹²

Another step away from being "off", and also away from trying to be on target with/about women (as the Blacktown Westpoint image attempts to be), would be to rethink the terms of my initial question about the gap between my theoretical speech and its object. For, having said that the text-image relation (fig.2) could be my object, the gap narrows too easily to a purely professional dispute; a textual critique of sociological constructions of the real, for example. My difficulty in the shopping centre project is thus not simply my relation as intellectual to the culture I'm speaking "about", but to whom I will imagine that I will be speaking.

So if, in a first instance, the task of differentiating shopping centres involves a problem with fascinated description -- consuming and consumerist list-making, attempts



I. Introduction

The basis of this study is an exploration of the relationship between human behaviour and the environment, a subject of increasing interest to researchers in fields such as planning, architecture and psychology. The spectrum of behaviour chosen has been that of leisure because of its increasing importance in contemporary society, a broad definition of leisure behaviour has been taken which is far more inclusive than the traditional interpretation of leisure as active recreation. This study has focused on recreational and discretionary leisure behaviour because these are the types of leisure behaviour which are generally not planned for since they do not fit within the formal definition of recreation. These are the random and unstructured leisure activities of everyday life which range from watching shopping centre displays, walking a path or simply 'hanging around' to making house improvements, watching television and reading.

It is considered that this type of leisure behaviour is vitally important to the quality of life of the individual, perhaps more so than formal active recreation which is performed by a minority of people.

This study evolved from research into the planning of community centres for developing urban areas. The need to encourage and plan for a focus of community activity and the revitalization of the town, location and function of such a centre led to the identification of the market place, the traditional community focus, as the possible basis of a community centre. At the same time it was recognized that a traditional community focus provides the opportunity for a wide range of behaviours, including those not strictly perceived as leisure. Hence leisure-behaviour within such a setting should be used to be relevant to the success of the setting.

This study has taken an example of the contemporary market place, the modern urbanised shopping centre, as the environmental setting for an exploration of the type of unstructured and discretionary leisure behaviour that happens in planned for by recreation planners. The research focus is on determining how the modern shopping centre functions as a community leisure resource.

A further objective of this research is to develop a methodology, that is, a combination of techniques to describe and quantify informal recreational and discretionary leisure behaviours, and to describe and measure environmental settings.

These objectives are preliminary to an assessment of how the environmental setting influences—either by facilitating or impeding—leisure behaviour. Such an assessment has implications for government policy in the provision of facilities at shopping urban areas for public development and will lead on to future research.

The attention chosen to develop these objectives is the shopping, shopping centre at Blacktown and the same method was applied with great effect at other centres.

Fig. 2
Mother and child as sociological text

Source: The Shopping Centre As A Community Leisure Resource.
Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978.

to freeze and fix a spectacular reality -- my second problem is to find a mode of address that may "evade" the fascinated or mirroring relationship to both the institutional discourses "about" women that I'm contesting, and the imaginary figure of Everywoman that those discourses, like many feminist arguments, keep on throwing up.

Pedestrian notes on modernity

However, in making that argument I evaded the problem of other, rather than "ordinary", women. I slid from restating the conventional case that an image of a woman shopping is not a real or really representative woman shopping, to talking as though that difference absolved me from thinking about other women's ideas about their experience in shopping centres, as "users" and workers there. This is a problem of method, to which I'd like to return. First, a detour to consider the second inquiry I've had from other women: "What's the point of differentiating shopping centres? So what if they're not all the same?"

Here I want to make two points about method.

The first is that if this project on "things to do with shopping centres" could have a sub-title, it would be "pedestrian notes on modernity". I do agree with Alice Jardine's argument in her book Gynesis that feminist criticism has much to gain from debates about modernity.¹³ These are important not only because of their relation to women's histories as objects of power-knowledge in the terms I

described above, but also because of the ways in which images of "Woman" function to signify a problem of (power)knowledge. I certainly also agree that as well as looking at how "woman" or "femininity" came to function as a fulcrum metaphor in those debates, we need histories of women modernists instead of only talking about mainly male philosophers and the white avant-gardes of nearly a century ago.¹⁴ However I don't think I do agree with Jardine that there's a risk of women becoming, as she puts it, "that profoundly archaic silhouette -- poet and madwoman -- who finally took a peek at modernity and then quickly closed the door" (49).

If the broad impact of modernisation in culture is seen as what lies beyond the door, not just aesthetic and philosophical modernism (a distinction which Jardine herself is careful to make), then most women have, one way or another, had to go through that door -- or rather, many different doors -- a long time ago. If we consider that the home has been one of the major experimental sites of modernisation, for consumerism as well as colonialism, then "modernity" has rather come through women's doors whether they wished it so or not;¹⁵ and if any archaic silhouette is peeking and hovering at a door, it is perhaps the literary theorist looking back longingly at aesthetic and philosophical dilemmas you can find made redundant on television, or on remainder at shoppingtown, any old day of the week.

This is one context in which I'd claim the word "pedestrian". Like studying women modernists, studying shopping centres should be one way to contest the idea that

you can find, for example, at moments in the work of Julia Kristeva, that the cultural production of "actual women" has historically fallen short of a modernity understood as, or in terms derived from, the critical construction of modernism.¹⁶ I prefer to study the everyday, the so-called banal, the supposedly un- or non-experimental, asking not, "why does this fall short of modernism?" but, "how do classical theories of modernism fall short of women's modernity?".

Secondly, the figure of the pedestrian gives me a way of imaging a method for analysing shopping centres that doesn't succumb unequivocally to the lure of using the classical images of the Imaginary, in the psychoanalytic sense, as a mirror to the shoppingtown spectacle. Such images are very common now in the literature about shopping centres: especially about big, enclosed, enveloping, "spectacular" centres like Indooroopilly Shoppingtown (fig. 3). Like department stores before them, and which they now usually contain, shopping centres are described as palaces of dreams, halls of mirrors, galleries of illusion...and the fascinated analyst becomes identified as a theatre critic, reviewing the spectacle, herself in the spectacle, and the spectacle in herself. This rhetoric is closely related to the vision of shoppingtown as Eden or paradise: the shopping centre is figured as a mirror to utopian desire, the desire of fallen creatures nostalgic for the primal garden yet aware that their paradise is now an illusion.

The pedestrian, or the woman walker, doesn't escape this dreamy ambivalence. Indeed, sociological studies suggest that

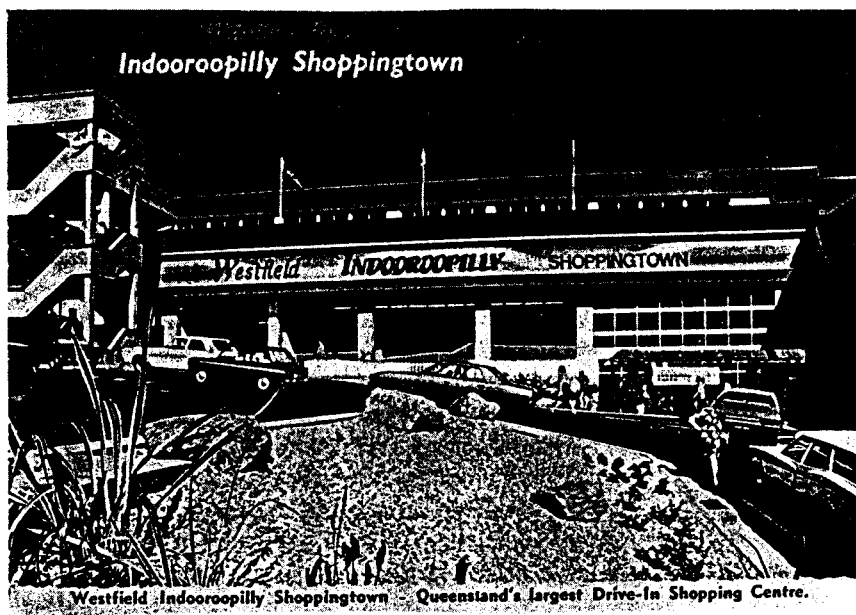


Fig. 3
Postcard, Indooroopilly Shoppingtown, Brisbane, 1985.

women who don't come in cars to shopping centres spend much more time in them than those that do. The slow, evaluative, appreciatively critical relation is not enjoyed to the same extent by women who hit the carpark, grab the goods, and head on out as fast as possible. Obviously, different women do both at different times. But if walking around for a long time in one centre creates engagement with and absorption in the spectacle, then one sure way to at least begin from a sharply defined sense of critical estrangement is to arrive at a drive-in centre on foot and have to find a way to walk in. Most women non-drivers don't, of course, arrive on foot (especially not with children) but by public transport -- which can also produce an acutely estranging effect.

I have to insert a qualification here about the danger of constructing exemplary allegorical figures (such as "the woman walker") if they are taken to refer to a model of the "empirical social user" of shopping centres. It is a futile exercise to try to make generalisations about the users of shopping centres at any particular time, even in terms of class, race, age or gender. Certainly, it is true that where you find a centre in a socially homogenised area -- common in some but not all suburban regions of most Australian cities -- you do find a high incidence of regular use by specific social groups contributing strongly to the centre's identity-effect. Nevertheless, at many centres this is not the case. Even where it is, such generalisations remain abstractions for concrete, practical reasons: cars, public transport, visiting and tourist practices (since shopping centres can be used for

sightseeing), and day-out patterns of movement, all mean that centres do not automatically "reflect" the composition of their immediate social environment. Different practices of use will also intersect in one centre on any given day: some people may be there for the one and only time in their lives; occasional users choose that centre rather than this on that day for particular or arbitrary reasons; people may shop at one centre and go to another to socialise or hang around. The use of centres as meeting-places, and sometimes for warmth and shelter, by young people, pensioners, the unemployed and the homeless is a familiar part of their social function -- one often planned for, now, by centre management through the distribution of benches, video games and security guards. Many of a centre's habitual users may not always live in its vicinity.

Shopping centres illustrate very well the argument that you can't treat a public at a cultural event as directly expressive of social groups and classes, or their supposed sensibility.¹⁷ Publics are not stable, homogenous entities, and polemical claims assuming that they are tell us little beyond the position being claimed by the speaker. This may be interesting and consequential in itself, but it doesn't necessarily say much about the wider social realities such polemics often invoke.

Shopping centre designers know this very well, in fact, and in the early 1980s retailing theory began to talk quite explicitly about the need to break down the old, standardised predication of a "vast monolithic middle-class market" for

shopping centre product that had characterised the strategy of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸ The marketing philosophy of the 1980s was rather to promote spectacles of "diversity and market segmentation": that is, to produce images of class, ethnic, age and gender differentiation in particular centres, not because a Vietnamised centre, for example, could "express" the target culture and better serve Vietnamese (though it may well do so, particularly since retail theorists seem to have taken the idea partly from the forms of community politics) but because the display of difference would increase a centre's "tourist" appeal to others from elsewhere.¹⁹

This is a response, of course, to the disintegration of the post-war "middle class" and the ever-growing disparity in the developed nations between rich and poor. This disparity is quite menacing to the suburban shopping centres, and the differential thematisation of "shoppers", and thus of centres to serve them, is an attempt to manage the change. In 1983 one theorist imagined the future as a proliferating series of shopper-genres: "Centres will be designed specifically to meet demands of the economic shopper, the recreational shopper, or the pragmatic shopper, and so on".²⁰ His scenario has been realised to some extent, although once again this does not mean that as shoppers we do in fact conform to, let alone identify with, the proffered generic images of our demands.

That said, I want to make one more point about pedestrian leisureliness and critical time. One thing that it's important to do with particular centres is to write them a (differential) history. This can be surprisingly difficult and

time-consuming. The shopping centre "form" itself -- a form often described as "one of the few new building types created in our time"²¹ -- has had its histories written, mostly in heroic and expansive terms. However, I have found in practice that while some local residents are able to tell stories about a particular development and its effects on their lives, the people who manage centres in Australia are often disconcerted at the suggestion that their centre could have a history. There are several reasons for this -- short-term employment patterns, employee and even managerial indifference to the workplace, ideologies about what counts as proper history, the consecration of shopping centres to the perpetual present of consumption (now-ness), suspicion of "media inquiries" in centres hostile to publicity they don't control, and also the feeling that in many cases the history is best forgotten. The building of Indooroopilly Shoppingtown, for example, required the blitzing of a huge chunk of old residential Indooroopilly.

There is a parallel elision of local shopping centre histories in much of the critical writing on centres, except for those which, like Southdale mall or Faneuil Hall Marketplace in the United States and Roselands in Australia, figure as pioneers in the history of development. Leaving aside for the moment the material produced about particular developments by commercial interests -- which tends to be dominated, as one might expect, by economic and futuristic speculation with an interventionist aim -- I'd argue that an odd gap usually appears between, on the one hand, critical writing where the shopping place becomes the metaphorical site

for a practice of personal reminiscence (autobiography, the production of a written-self) and, on the other, the formal description of existing structures found in architectural criticism.²² Walter Benjamin's "A Berlin Chronicle" (for older market forms) and Donald Horne's remembrance of the site of Sydney's Miranda Fair in Money Made Us are examples of the first practice, while Neville Quarry's reviews of The Jam Factory and Knox City Shopping Centre provide an example of the second.²³

The gap between these two genres, reminiscence and formal description, may in turn correspond to one produced by so-called "Man-Environment" studies. Amos Rapoport's influential book The Meaning of the Built Environment depended entirely on an opposition between "users' meanings" (the personal) and "designers' meanings" (the professional).²⁴ A feminist study of shopping centres could occupy this user/designer, memory/aesthetics gap, not to "close" or to "bridge" it but to dislocate the relationship between the poles that create it and dissolve their imaginary autonomy. However, any vaguely anti-humanist critique would want to say as much. What is of particular interest to me is to make relations between, on the one hand, those competing practices of "place" (for Michel de Certeau, "spatial stories") that, by investing sites with meaning, make them sites of social conflict, and, on the other, women's discourses of memory and local history.²⁵

A shopping centre is a "place" combining an extreme project of general planning competence (efforts at total unification, total management) with an intense degree of

aberrance and diversity in local performance. It is also a place consecrated to timelessness and stasis (no clocks, perfect weather...) yet lived and celebrated, lived and loathed, in intimately historic terms: for some, as a ruptural event (catastrophic or Edenic) in the social experience of a community, for others, as the enduring scene (like the cinema once was, and the home still may be) of all the changes, fluctuations, and repetitions of the passing of everyday life.²⁶ For both of these reasons, a shopping centre seems to be a good place to begin to consider women's "cultural production" of modernity.

This is also why I suggested that it can be important to write a history of particular shopping centres. It is one way in which the clash of conflicting programs for the management of change, and for resisting, refusing or evading "management", can better be understood.

Such a history can be useful in other ways. It certainly helps to de-naturalise the myths of spectacular identity-in-place that centres produce in order to compete with each other, by analysing how these myths, those spectacles, are constructed for particular spaces over time. The qualification "particular" is crucial here, I think, because like many critics now I have my doubts that polemical demonstrations of the fact that such "myth-making" takes place have much to offer contemporary cultural politics. Like revelations of essentialism or, indeed, "naturalism" in other people's arguments, de-mythologisation too often retrieves, at the end of the process, its own untransformed basic premises now

masked as surprising conclusions. The project itself is anachronistic: commercial culture now proclaims and advertises, rather than "naturalises", its powers of artifice, myth-invention, simulation. In researching the history of myth-making in a particular place, however, one is obliged to consider how it works in concrete social circumstances that inflect, in turn, its workings -- and to learn from that place, make discoveries, change the drift of one's analysis, rather than use it as a site of theoretical performance.

Secondly, such a history must assume that centres and their myths are actively transformed by their "users", if in ambiguous ways, and that the history itself counts as a transformation by a user. In my study this will mean, in practice, that I'm only going to analyse shopping centres that I know personally.

I'm not going to use them to tell my life story, but I do refuse the discursive position of visitor-observer, or ethnographer/celebrant, by setting up as my objects only those centres where I have, or have had, some practice other than that of analyst -- places I've lived near or used as consumer, window-shopper, tourist, or as escapee from a problem or a passing mood. The sociologist John Carroll reports, with the cheerfulness of the true conservative, "The Promotions Manager of one of the Shopping World chains in Australia has speculated that these centres may replace Valium."²⁷ Carroll doesn't say anything about their role in creating needs for Valium, or in selling it, but only if you combine all three functions do you get a sense, I think, of Shopping World's

lived ambiguity.

Here I return to the question of "other women", and my relation to their relation to these shopping centres. I've discussed the problems that arise in this context from such procedures as sampling "representative" shoppers, targeting "user groups" and framing exemplary figures, whether of shopping-Woman, ordinariness, community, or, I would now add, of "otherness". This doesn't mean that I think there is anything intrinsically wrong with those methods, that I wouldn't use them in another context or borrow, in this context, from studies which have used them. Nor does it mean that I go to the opposite extreme of claiming that the one true knowledge of shopping centres is produced from personal experience (which would preclude me from considering what it's like to work in one for years).

However, I am interested in something a little more pedestrian than either a professionally based informatics or a narcissistically enclosed reverie (both of which may take the generic form of a theoretical meditation on the idea of the social other). For a "third term" rendering sociable my relation to Shopping World, I prefer impromptu shopping-centre encounters: chit-chat, with women I meet in and around and because of these centres, whether family friends or total strangers. Collecting chit-chat in situ is, of course, a pedestrian professional practice: journalism. Practising and analysing "journalism" in terms of the theoretical concerns I've outlined is, I would argue, an effective means of doubting and revising, rather than confirming (as the genres

of Theory and Memory tend to do), my own "planning" program.

Mall genres

In order to pass on to a few comments about one shopping centre history, I'll describe the set of three to which it belongs in my study. I chose this set initially for personal reasons: three familiar shopping centres, one of which my family used and two of which I had often used as a tourist; two of which I loved, and one of which I hated. However, the set also conforms to a system of formal distinctions historically used by people who build and manage shopping centres. These are planners' terms, "designers' meanings".²⁸ But most people are familiar in practice with these distinctions, and some cities, like Canberra, are built around them.

Until recently, there has been a more or less universally accepted classification system based on three main types of centre: the "neighbourhood" centre, the "community" centre, and the "regional" centre. Some writers add extra categories; like the "super-regional", a huge and now mostly uneconomic dinosaur, rare in Australia, but common in more populous countries, with 4 to 6 full-line department stores. With the ageing of the classic suburban form, and the burgeoning of rival retail formats better adapted to current economic conditions -- discount chains, hypermarkets, neo-arcades, ethnic and other "theme" environments, history-precincts, specialty malls (an interesting development whereby an old

shopping centre can be renovated, or a new centre built, to provide 150 shoe shops rather than the old total life-style mix), multi-use centres, revived street markets (now often enfolded, to sell "fresh produce", in suburban malls) and urban mega-structures -- the basic schema is losing some of its reality-productive power. However, it remains operative and, in Australia, dominant for those enduring and still active structures of suburban life that I'm discussing.

The basic triad -- neighbourhood/community/regional -- is defined not in terms of catchment-area size, or type of public attracted, or acreage occupied. It depends instead on the type of major store that a centre offers to "anchor" its specialty shops. Neighbourhood stores have only a supermarket, while community centres have a supermarket and either a discount house or a chain store. Regional centres have both of these plus at least one full department store. The anchor store, usually placed at the end of the central shopping strip, is also called the magnet: it is held to regulate the flows of attraction, circulation and expulsion of people, commodities and cars.

Indooroopilly Shoppingtown in Brisbane (fig. 3) is a canonical example of post-war regional shopping centre. It is also an aristocrat, a "Westfield". As Australia's leading shopping centre developer, Westfield for a time achieved the ultimate goal of operating in the United States and buying into the movie business; in its glory days of the mid-1980s, Westfield celebrated its own norm-setting status in an art corridor at Sydney's Miranda Fair, where you could visit

glorious full-colour photographs of all the other major Westfields in Australia, including Indooroopilly. Indooroopilly Shoppingtown itself is a place with a postcard - a site unto itself from which people can state their whereabouts in writing. It is an instance of the model form celebrated in the general histories I mentioned above; expansionist histories of centrifugal movements of cars and people away from old city-centres because of "urban congestion" (often a euphemism for racialised class conflict) in American and Australian cases, and war damage as well as congestion in European towns and cities.²⁹

Ideally these centres, according to the histories, are so-called "greenfield" developments on the edge of or outside towns, in that ever-receding transformation zone where the country becomes the city as suburbia. Of course, they have often been the product of suburb-blitzing, not suburb-creating processes, though the blitzing of one may often help to create another on the city's periphery. So strong has been the force of the centrifugal imaginary that in the case of the Brisbane Courier-Mail's coverage of the building of Indooroopilly shoppingtown, the houses being moved to make way for it were represented as flying off happily out, like pioneers, to the far frontiers of the city.³⁰ The post-war regional centre, then, is represented as the "revolutionary", explosive suburban form.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Fortitude Valley Plaza (fig. 4), again in Brisbane, is an example of a neighbourhood centre. The term "neighbourhood" may conjure

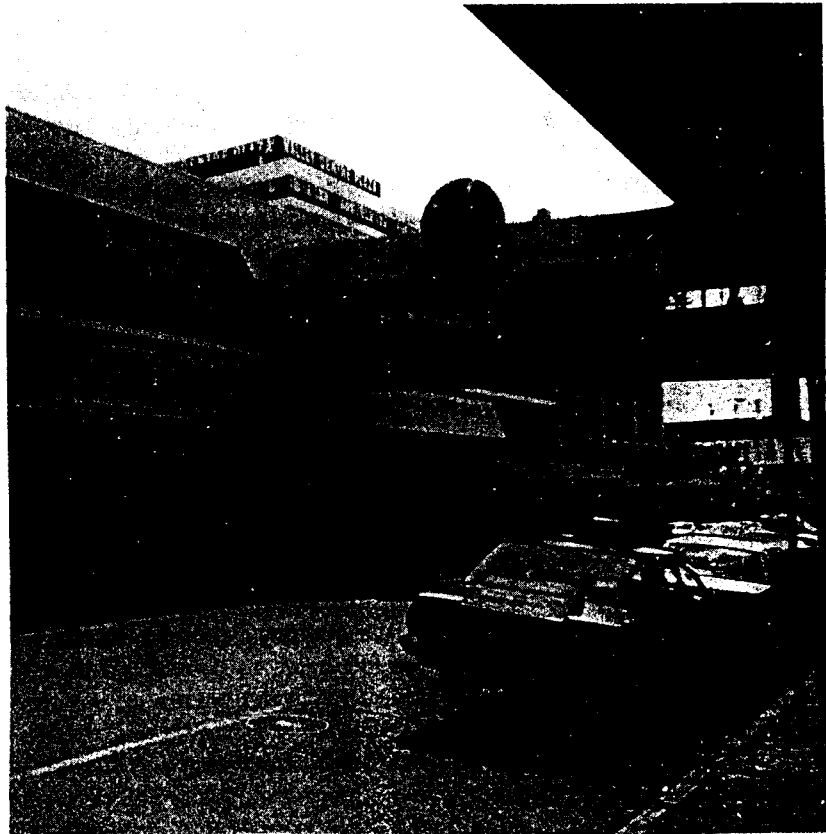


Fig. 4
Fortitude Valley Plaza Walkway, Brisbane, 1985.

cosy, friendly images of intimacy, but this centre is at a major urban transit point, over a railway station, in a high density area and on one of the most polluted roads in Australia. It is also an early example neither of greenfield nor blitzing development, but of the practice of "in-fill" or "twilight zone" development that became popular in the central shopping districts of many country towns and old suburbs during the 1970s and early 1980s. It means that bits of shopping centre and arcade snake around to swallow the "gaps" between existing structures. This practice was important in the downtown revivals that, along with the energy crisis, succeeded the heroic age of the regional shopping centre.

Again, the Courier-Mail's coverage was metaphorically apt. Because there had been an old open railway line on the site, the Valley Plaza was said to be resourcefully filling in the "previously-useless airspace" wasted by the earlier structure.³¹ It was promoted as a thrifty, even ecologically sound solution to a problem of resources. The Valley Plaza is also an example of a centre that has undergone an identity change. When I first studied it in 1983, it was dank and dated -- vintage pop futurist in style, with plenty of original but pollution-blackened 1960s orange and geometrical trimmings. Then it was painted a pale jade green and Chinatownified, with Chinese characters replacing the old op-art effects, to blend in with the ethnic repackaging of Fortitude Valley as a whole.

Finally, Green Hills (fig.5) is an example of the mediating category, a "community" centre in East Maitland -- a coalfields town near the industrial city of Newcastle north of



Fig. 5
Entrance to Green Hills, East Maitland, 1985.

Sydney in New South Wales. Green Hills is a Woolworths centre, with a supermarket and a "Big W" Discount House. Unlike the other two centres it began as an open mall and it is oddly difficult to photograph: not just because it is long and rather careless of external display (although it has a coherent inner design as a simulated village square) but more importantly because it is formally rather blurry and hard to see from a passing car. The centre is badly signed and bordered, and it is mostly hidden from view in relation to the major highway that runs right alongside. Whatever the considerations or accidents behind this design, its effect is to secure an introverted identity. Like much cultural production in Australian country towns, you have to know where it is to find it.

Yet Green Hills was, for many years, very successful. Generically a community centre, it had in practice a regional function with the Big W Discount magnet pulling in people from all over the Hunter Valley who might once have gone through to Newcastle. People didn't come to East Maitland, they "went to Green Hills". So if, in this particular triad, Indooroopilly was explosive and the Valley Plaza was thrifty in the local rhetorics of space, Green Hills was represented in the terms of a go-ahead conservatism -- extending and renewing the old town of Maitland, while acting to help maintain the town's economic and cultural independence.

Users and designers

I want to examine the representation of Green Hills in more detail, and one reason for looking at the triad of formal distinctions has been to provide a context for doing so. In the short history of Green Hills that I've been able to construct it is clear that allusions to the other shopping centre forms, and especially to the suburban-explosive model, played a complex role firstly in Woolworths' strategic presentation of the project to build Green Hills, and secondly in the promotional rhetoric used to specify an ideal public to whom the centre would appeal -- something like "the loyal citizens" of Maitland.

I must make two qualifications about what sort of history this is, and why. First, it is primarily derived from coverage in the local newspaper, The Maitland Mercury. Other sources generate other stories. This version is specifically concerned with the rhetorical collusion between the local media and the interests of Woolworths, and with the ways that this relationship cut across two pre-existing but at this point contradictory collusions of interest between the media and the Council, on the one hand, and the media and local small business interests on the other. Close relations between these parties -- Council, local media, small business -- are common now in country newspapers, which tend to define "the town's interests" very much in terms of the doings of civic fathers and local "enterprise". Sport and the cycle of family life are two major sites on which those doings are played out. In that sense, country newspapers are unashamedly one long advertorial. But in the building of Green Hills, civic fathers

and local business were opposed in a conflict that took the form of a debate about the meaning of "local community". Small business in particular was most alarmed about the prospect of the Green Hills development. To describe this conflict briefly, I shall give it the form of an over-coherent or paranoid story.

Second, as my choice of sources suggests, this version could be criticised as lopsidedly restricted to "designers' meanings", planners' programs. I don't mind too much about that, for two reasons. One is that as a long-term if irregular "user" of Green Hills, I was more interested in pursuing what I didn't already know about it or hadn't noticed when it was happening. This "place" had simply appeared where once there was a scrubby borderland that in the 1960s signified to me and my friends the thrill of driving out of town and the ambivalence of coming home, and that had been in earlier decades a field of the illicit outside town (the forbidden picnic-ground).

The other reason is that I actually have no clear idea of what follows for the study of more or less mainstream, un-transgressive but yet not significantly "dominant" consumer practices from the polemical espousal of an emphasis on "users' meanings" -- if not more celebrant sociology, a reinvigorated local history, and more of the same polemic. Unlike Michel de Certeau's "spatial stories" or Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the minor³², both of which give us ways of studying social power and cultural difference in terms of overlap and involvement between specific groups, the

production/consumption dichotomy seems to generate an abstract polemic that is relentlessly repetitive in form.

Yet this form of polemic is attractive. If many of Adorno's most paranoid theses about the administered society now seem to have come to pass from little Green Hills to urban shoppingworld mega-structures (with banking, residential, computer, entertainment and governmental facilities laterally linked to homes, offices, industries and departments of State elsewhere), then new cultural practices have also begun to develop in response to their spectacular inefficiencies, failures and vulnerabilities as well as to the pleasures they provide. To stress the latter rather than the former is realistic, cheering, and encouraging. It makes better political sense.

Nevertheless, the proliferation of articles calling for studies of consumption not derived from production has been accompanied by a relative paucity of research beginning from that assumption rather than repeatedly demonstrating its necessity. There has also been much recycling of exemplary "popular method" stories (punk and carnival, for example, recur) that unvaryingly reiterate basic principles of cultural action -- inversion, cut-up, appropriation, assemblage and so on.³³ Both of these developments suggest to me that, apart from the established twin practices of empirical micro-studies of groups and theoretical manifesto writing (neither of which in practice really challenges the production/consumption dichotomy, stressing rather a re-distribution of emphasis within it), it can be quite hard to imagine exactly what

(apart from autobiography) to do next³⁴.

Part of the problem, perhaps, is the common substitution I performed above between "users' meanings" and "practices of consumption". It's an easy slide, from user to consumer to consumption, from persons to structures and processes. Much could be written about what's wrong with making this and the parallel slide from notions of individual and group "creativity" to cultural "production" to political "resistance" -- which can lead to the kind of criticism that Paul Willemen once parodied as "the discovery that washing your car on Sunday is a revolutionary event".³⁵

My point here is simply that if the production/consumption opposition is not just a "designer/user" relation writ large (because relations of production cannot be trivialised as "people planning things"), then it doesn't necessarily follow that the representations of a shopping centre design project circulated by local media and consumed, creatively or otherwise, by a public that is also the centre's target clientele, can be slotted away as production history. I'm not sure that media practices, for example, can usefully be "placed" on either side of such a dichotomy. The assumption that "production" and "consumption" can be construed as parallel or diverging realities too often includes another assumption, made more dubious every day by technological change, that we know enough now about production and can move to the "other" side. As though production, somehow, stays put.

A short history of Green Hills

The story of Green Hills is in a way an allegory about a politics of staying put, and it begins, paranoiacally, not with the first obvious appearance of a sign staking out a site (fig. 6)³⁶ but behind the scenes, with an article in the NSW State Planning Authority journal SPAN in January 1969, and a report about it published in The Newcastle Morning Herald (24 January 1969). The Herald's story had the provocative title "Will Maitland Retain Its Entity Or Become A Newcastle Suburb?"

Several general problems were facing Maitland, and many small towns in Eastern Australia, at this time: population drift, shrinking local employment prospects, declining or anachronistic community facilities, "nothing to do" syndrome. Maitland also had regional problems as a former rural service centre and coalfields capital en route to becoming a dormitory suburb menaced by residential creep towards Newcastle -- then about 20 miles away and getting closer.³⁷ The town had also suffered physical fragmentation after ruinous floods in 1949 and 1955, newsreel footage of which may be seen in Phillip Noyce's film Newsfront (1978). The floods devastated the old commercial centre and the inner residential areas: houses were shifted out and away in response to a "natural" blitzing.³⁸ Rezoning followed: the houses that stayed put (like my family home, covered by water up to the rooftop in 1955) were gradually isolated in the middle of panel-beating works and light industrial sheds.

In these inauspicious conditions, the threat of annexation uttered by the Newcastle Herald produced an



Fig. 6
Green Hills sign, 1985.

outraged response in that afternoon's Maitland Mercury from the Maitland mayor who, in spurning these "dismal prophecies", mentioned the "hope" that Woolworths would soon name the day for a development at East Maitland. From this moment on, and during all the conflicts that followed, Woolworths never figured in the Council discourse as a national chain just setting up a store in a likely spot, but as a gallant and caring saviour come to make Maitland whole again -- to stop the gap, restore definition, contain the creeping and seeping and save Our Town's "Entity". In actual fact, and following a well-known law of development, Green Hills was built on the town fringe nearest Newcastle; growth around it took the town kilometres closer to Newcastle, and helped to fragment further the old city centre.

Four months after the SPAN and Herald incidents, the Mercury published a photo of an anonymous man staring at a mystery sign behind wire in the bush, saying "This site has been selected for another all Australian development by Woolworths" (16 June 1969). The "site" was at that time still a ragged border wasteland, across the hill from a notorious old "slum" called Eastville. The Mercury photo initiated a long-running mystery story about the conversion of an indefinite bush-border into a "site", the site into a place, and the place into a suburb, in a process of territorialisation that I'll call the fabrication of a place name.

To summarise the episodes briefly: first, the mystery sign turned out to be not just a bait to initiate interest but

a legal loophole that allowed Woolworths to claim, when challenged by local business firms, that it had fulfilled the terms of a 1965 agreement to develop the site by a certain date (MM, 25 June 1969). The sign itself could count as a developmental structure, and it had appeared just in time. Second, the first sign was replaced by another: a board at first adorned only by the letter "G". Maitland "citizens" were to participate in a guessing competition to find the name of the place, and a new letter was added each week until the full place-name, and the name of a lucky winner, emerged. This happened on October 22, 1969; and on the following Remembrance Day, November 11, the City Council abolished the name of the slum across the highway, Eastville. Eastville's name was to be forgotten, said the Mercury, in order to "unify the area with East Maitland" ("Eastville To Go West", MM, 12 November 1969).

The basic Green Hills complex -- at this stage a neighbourhood centre with a supermarket only -- was opened in February 1972. The ceremony included ritual displays of crowd hysteria, with frenzied women fainting and making off with 5,000 pairs of 8 cent pantyhose in the first five minutes (MM 10 February 1972). This rite of baptism, or of public consent to the place-name, was repeated even more fervently in November 1977 when the Big W Discount House was added to make Green Hills a community centre. This time, women came wearing signs of Green Hills identity: said the Mercury, "A sea of green mums flooded in...The mums dressed in sea green, celery green, grass green, olive green, green florals -- every green imaginable -- to take advantage of a 2NX offer of free dinner

tickets for women dressed in that colour" (MM, 14 November 1977).

That wasn't the end of it. The process known as "metro-nucleation" had begun. In 1972, a company associated with Woolworths began a 100-home subdivision behind the centre. The area then acquired more parking, a pub, a motel, light industry, an old peoples' home, more specialty shops at the centre itself in 1980, and then, in 1983, a Community Health Centre. This Centre, said the Mercury -- forgetting that the forgetting of Eastville had been to unify East Maitland -- would serve "to service people living in the Beresfield, Maitland, Bolwarra, East Maitland and Green Hills areas" (MM, 14 November 1983). Maitland's "entity" at this stage was still a dubious mess, but Green Hill's identity was established, its status as a place name secure. Presented rhetorically as a gesture of community unification, it had been, in effect, suburban-explosive in function.

The story continues, of course: I shan't follow it further, except to note that after this decade of expansion (a decade of acute economic distress for Maitland, and Hunter Valley coal towns in general), the popularity of Green Hills declined in the late 1980s. Woolworths got into trouble nationally and their Big W discount stores failed to keep pace with newer retail styles. Green Hills in particular faced stiff competition when a few blocks of the old city centre were torn down for a Coles-Myer Super K semi-hypermarket, and rapid in-fill development brought the twilight zone to town. Even residents hostile to these changes transferred their

interest to them: one said, "It's awesome how many places they think we can use to just to buy our few pounds of mince".

Things to do with history

I want to conclude with a few general points about things to do with this story.

First, there are a number of standardised elements in it that would appear in any such story set anywhere. For example, oceanic and hysterical crowd behaviour in which the crowd itself becomes a decorative feature of the shopping centre's performance is a traditional motif, and the Mercury in the late 1960s had run pedagogical news features on how people were behaving at shopping centres in Sydney and the United States.³⁹ More generally, the process of development itself was impeccably normal.

Yet in looking at local instances of these general models, the well-known things that shopping centres do, one is also studying the practical inflections, or rewritings, of those models that can account for, and found, a regional politics. In the Green Hills case, the Woolworths success story was produced by the media very much in terms of a specific response to pre-existing discourses on Maitland's "very own" problems of identity and unity. In this sense, Woolworths' "success" was precisely to efface the similarity between what was happening in Maitland and what was going on elsewhere. The exploitation of the sense of "difference" in contemporary culture can be quite as complex as, and is

necessarily related to, the construction and de-construction of identities.

Second, I'd like to use the Green Hills study to question some recent accounts in cultural studies of so-called "commodity semiosis" -- the processes whereby commodities become signs, and signs become commodities -- and the tendency to feminise, through a theme of seduction, the terms in which that semiosis is discussed.

In an interesting critique of the work of Jean Baudrillard, Andrew Wernick writes:

The sales aim of commodity semiosis is to differentiate the product as a valid, or at least resonant, social totem, and this would be impossible without being able to appeal to taken-for-granted systems of cultural reference.⁴⁰

While it is inappropriate, if consonant with market-speak, to equate a whole shopping centre with "the product" in Wernick's sense, I could say that, in the Green Hills case, Woolworths' strategy in selling the centre to the town was to appeal to that taken-for-granted cultural reference system of "booster" discourse deployed by ideologues of Australian country towns - towns which have long been losing their old reasons for being, and so their sense of the meaning and aim of their "history". Donald Horne has defined the elements of booster discourse as 1) getting bigger and 2) making it last⁴¹ -- or in other words, "keeping it up".

If space today in some feminist theories, and theories of the feminine, is thematised as feminine (in the ways which Alice Jardine has studied in Gynesis), and if commodity "appeal" is also frequently theorised as feminine (as in Baudrillard's Seduction, for example), I think that feminists should also keep looking at rhetorics of space and commerce that are, as systems of cultural reference, polemically masculine. To borrow a phrase again from Gynesis, the booster reference-system to which the Green Hills campaign appealed could be called, "male paranoia". For Jardine:

Male paranoia involves, fundamentally, the fear of the loss either of all boundaries or of those boundaries becoming too painfully constricting. And this encounter with boundaries is almost always described by men as an encounter with what is called "God" -- that being who has no boundaries. (98)

She is talking about President Schreber. In Maitland, the being without boundaries is the spirit of Development: in boosterism it is Development that is seen, paradoxically (and wrongly), to protect against both loss of Entity and the painfully constricting condition that town councils still call, well into the era of limits, "lack of growth"

I am not suggesting here that capital imperatives -- development, growth, accumulation -- are the same as or reducible to some psychology of "masculinity".⁴² I simply want to claim, firstly, that the rhetoric of maleness can provide

certain projects with a reference-system vital, in the propaganda phase, to securing their means of realisation (economic rationalism provides an obvious example with its reification of the "tough", the "hard" decisions, admitting no dispute that the "decisions" in question must be made);⁴³ and, secondly, that this rhetoric is in many domains of our lives still active, effective, destructive and seemingly impervious to the crisis of Reason so often said -- in the name of the other -- to be engulfing it.

However my rewriting of "male paranoia" might none the less be merely a smart joke unless I add two more things to the Green Hills story. One is that part of Woolworths' campaign against local small business was precisely to claim that the town might be saved from suburbanisation by Newcastle (that is, from loss of boundaries) only if Maitland could further suburbanise itself internally -- burst its outside borders, diversify, and come to "rival" Newcastle. The claim to rivalry was usually mediated by explicit comparisons between an ideal of what Green Hills would become, and Newcastle's proud and historic Jesmond Big W -- a structure in fact quite unlike Green Hills, but quite like Indooroopilly Shoppingtown. In a cruel twist, therefore, the local business interests were positioned not only as losers, but as unpatriotic for even trying to win -- traitors to (imaginary) home-town desires, which could better be satisfied by Woolworths.

The other comment is that male paranoia's claim to rivalry was materialised at Green Hills in the achievement of

a suburbanising decor (fig. 7) which gave it that hallucinatory resemblance to shoppingtowns everywhere else, plus a little frisson of distinction, that shivery edge of identity. One taken-for-granted cultural reference system that a feminist critique of commodity semiosis might find at Green Hills is a suburban garden furniture aesthetic that not only makes all shopping centres seem the same, but, through a play of echoing spatial analogy, makes shopping centres seem like a range of other sites consecrated to the performance of family life, to women's work, emotional as well as physical, and to women's work in leisure: shoppingtown, beer garden, picnic spot, used-car yard with bunting, scenic lookout, town garden, public park, suburban backyard.

The brightly coloured benches of Green Hills -- along with coloured rubbish cones, rustic borders, foliage, planters, mulch and well-spaced saplings -- are direct descendants of what in 1960 Robin Boyd called, in The Australian Ugliness, the "desperately picturesque accoutrements" then just bursting out brightly as "features" at Australian beauty-spots.⁴⁴ There is nothing desperate about their picturesqueness now, although they may mean desperation to some of their users (as well as cheer and comfort to others, especially those who remember the unforgiving discomforts of seatless, as well as featureless, country town streets). Today, they work to produce a sense of "setting" that defines an imaginary coherence of public space in Australia -- or more precisely, of a cohesive "lifestyle" space declaring the dissolution of boundaries between public

and private space, between public domains of work and private spheres of leisure.

Janet Wolff has argued that the emergence of the distinction between public and private "spheres" in the nineteenth century made impossible a female flaneur -- a female strolling heroine "botanizing on the asphalt" as Walter Benjamin put it in his study of Baudelaire.⁴⁵ I'd want to argue that the proclaimed dissolution of public and private on the botanised asphalt of shoppingtown today makes possible, not a flaneuse, since that term becomes anachronistic, but a practice of modernity by women for which it is vital not to begin by identifying heroines and victims (even of conflicts with male paranoia), but rather a profound ambivalence about shifting roles.

Yet here again, I want to differentiate. At places "like" Green Hills, the given function of hallucinatory spatial resemblance and recall is not, as it might be in an urban road-romance, a thinning out of significance through space such that one place ends up like any other in its drab indifference. Nor is it, as it might be in a big city, a move in a competitive game where one space says of its nearby rivals, "We Do All the Same Things Better". Green Hills appeals instead to a dream of plenitude, and of a paradoxically absolute yet expansive self-sufficiency: a country town (if not "male") paranoia seeking reassurance that nothing is lacking in this one spot. It's the motherland dream of "staying home", staying put: as an uncle said to me on a stray visit to Green Hills made simply to be sociable, waving

round at the mulch and the benches and the glass facade of Big W, "why go elsewhere when you've got it all here?" The centre itself, in his imagination, was not a fallen land of fragmented modernity but the Garden of Eden itself. (Two years later, however, he sent me by myself to buy him cut-price T-shirts from Super K in town -- now the place where everyone wants to shop but no-one cares to visit).

Shopping for repetition

Having arrived at last at the irresistible Big W magnet, I'd like to conclude with a comment on a text which seems to me to be a critical equivalent of the Garden of Eden fable by Myer's John Lennen with which I began. It is a passage from Terry Eagleton's book Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism, and it is also, obliquely, a parable of modernity that depends on figuring consumption as a seductively fallen state.

Paraphrasing and developing Benjamin's study of the flaneur, Eagleton writes:

...the commodity disports itself with all comers without its halo slipping, promises permanent possession to everyone in the market without abandoning its secretive isolation. Serializing its consumers it nevertheless makes intimate ad hominem address to each.⁴⁶

Now if this is not, as in Lennen's paper, a matter of Adam comforting Eve with a note on the postmodern condition, it is certainly a matter of Adam comforting himself with an ambivalent fantasy about Eve. It's a luscious, self-seducingly risqué fantasy that Adam has, a commodity-thought, rather like the exquisite bottle of perfume or the pure wool jumper in the import shop, nestling deep in an upmarket neo-arcade, its ambience aglow with pastels or, since that's now been overdone, cooled by marbloid Italianate tiling.

But its pertinence to retailing, commodity semiosis, and shopping practices today is questionable, not least because the development of forms like the neo-arcade, or the fantastically revamped pre-war elegance of certain city department stores, is a response to the shopping centre forms I've been discussing: a differential response which works by offering signs of old-fashioned commodity fetishism precisely because Australian suburban shopping centres don't do so. Part of my argument has been that in suburban practices it isn't necessarily or always the objects consumed that count in the act of "consumption" but rather that "unique sense of place". Beyond that, however, I think that the Benjamin-Eagleton style of boudoir-talk about commodities can be doubly misleading.

First, I would ask -- what is the sound of an intimate ad hominem address from a raincoat at Big W? where the secretive isolation of the thongs in a pile at Super-K? The commodities in a Discount House boast no halo, no aura. On the contrary, they promote a lived aesthetic of the serial, the machinic, the mass-reproduced: as one pair of thongs wears out it is

replaced by an identical pair, the same sweatshirt is bought in four different colours, or two different and two the same; a macrame planter defies all middle-class whole-earth naturalness connotations in its dyes of lurid chemical mustard and killer neon pink.

Second, commodity boudoir-talk gathers up into the single and class-specific image of the elite courtesan a number of different relations women and men may invent both to actual commodities, the activity of combining them and, above all, to the changing discursive frames (like shopping centres) that invest the practices of buying, trafficking with, and using commodities, with their variable local meanings.

So one of the things I'd like to do with shopping centres is to make it more difficult for cultural critics to fall back quite so comfortably on the classic image of European bourgeois luxury to articulate theories of sexual and economic exchange. If I were, for the sake of argument, to make up a fable of Adam and Eve and the fall into modernity, I wouldn't have my image of Eve taking comfort from modernist explanation (as she does from Lennen's Adam), and I wouldn't have her flattering him as she does for Eagleton's "comers". I'd have an image of her as a pedestrian, laughing at both of them, walking on past saying "boys -- you sound just like the snake".

Of course, that's not good enough. The Eden story itself is the problem, and the fable of the management of change is wrong with its images of the garden, the snake, the couple, the Fall -- and the terms that this story imposes no matter

how or by whom it's rewritten. To deny that shopping centres, and consumption, provide allegories of modernity as a fallen state is to claim that for feminism, some stories may be beyond salvage.

Like feminist film theory when it becomes obsessed with the lugubrious and plush seductiveness of white Woman in film noir, feminist cultural studies can easily find an attractive image of its own concerns, perhaps even of its "identity" as a site of intellectual work, in a breathlessly high-art melodrama of sexual commodification. A film about these matters and about elite courtesans, Seduction: The Cruel Woman by Elfi Mikesch and Monika Treut, was shown in 1986 at the first feminist cultural studies conference I attended.⁴⁷ Having come to the conference with shopping centres on my mind, this stylish and clever film interested me in its luxuriant difference from the imaginary world of an essay I've often wanted to write about country town familial sado-masochism, called "Maitland S&M".

This imaginary text is about the orchestration of modes of domestic repetition, the going back again and again over the same stories, the terrains, the same sore spots, that I think a centre like Green Hills has successfully incorporated and mobilised in its fabrication of a myth of staying put at home. In case this sounds like feminist paranoia about, once again, planners, designers and producers, I should say that one of the fascinating things about Big W aesthetics is the way that the store provides little more than a set of managerial props for the performance of inventive scenarios in

a drama that circulates endlessly between home and the pub and the carpark and Green Hills and back again to home. One can emerge for a good session of ritualised pain and sorrow (as well as, of course, more pedestrian experiences) dressed in nothing more ferocious or costly than a fluffy pink top and a sweet floral skirt.

My main point, however, is that insofar as I have myself used the story of Green Hills as an allegory, then it has been to argue that while it's crucial, and fun, for feminist criticism to keep on re-writing the given stories of culture, to keep on revising and transforming their meanings, we should also consider that with some stories in some places we do become cruelly bound by repetition, confined by the reiteration of the terms that we are contesting. Otherwise, in an act of voluntary if painful servitude, feminist criticism ties its own hands and finds itself, again and again, at Green Hills, bound back home -- to the same old story.

NOTES to Chapter Two

1. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984), 97. Further references in parentheses in the text.

2. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, Learning From Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form (Cambridge, Mass.:MIT Press, 1977).

3. I borrow this wonderful word from John Hartley, "Suburbanality (in Cultural Studies)", Meanjin 51.3 (1992), 453-64.

4. John Lennen, "Development in the Retail Scene", Shopping For A Retail Policy, A.I.U.S. Publication 99 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Urban Studies, 1982), 3.

5. Review of The Jam Factory in "A Shopping Guide", unpublished paper. My thanks to Professor Quarry for sharing this with me. Another section of the paper is published as "Knox City Shopping Centre: a review", Architecture Australia 67.5 (Nov. 1978), 68.

6. On the industrial motivations for this striving, see Jon Goss, "The 'Magic of the Mall': An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment", Annals of the Association of American Geographers 83.1 (1993), 18-47.

7. Iain Chambers, Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), 13.

8. Theodor Adorno, "Letters to Walter Benjamin", Aesthetics and Politics, translation editor Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 1977), 129.

9. I discuss ambivalence in more detail in "The man in the mirror: David Harvey's 'Condition' of postmodernity", Cultural Theory and Cultural Change ed. Mike Featherstone (London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: Sage, 1992), 253-79.

10. Useful collections providing entry-points to the vast literature on this topic include: Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires, eds, Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993); James Duncan and David Ley, eds, Place/Culture/Representation (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds, Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Michael Keith and Steve Pile, eds, Place and the Politics of Identity (London and New York:

Routledge, 1993); Doreen Massey, Space, Place and Gender (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, eds, Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991); Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger, eds, Nationalisms and Sexualities (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); George Robertson et al, eds, Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, eds, Postmodern Cities and Spaces (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995).

11. Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development, The Shopping Centre As A Community Leisure Resource (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978).

12. Some examples of this important research are Elaine S. Abelson, When Ladies Go A-Thieving: Middle-Class Shoplifters in the Victorian Department Store (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Susan Porter Benson, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores 1890-1940 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Erica Carter, "Alice in the Consumer Wonderland: West German case studies in gender and consumer culture", Gender and Generation ed. Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava (London: MacMillan, 1984), 185-214; David Chaney, "The Department Store as a Cultural Form", Theory, Culture and Society 1.3 (1983), 22-31; Rosalind Coward, Female Desire (London: Paladin, 1984); Beverley Kingston, Basket, Bag and trolley: A history of shopping in Australia (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994); Patricia Mellencamp, High Anxiety: Catastrophe, Scandal, Age, & Comedy (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992); Mica Nava, "Consumerism and its contradictions", Cultural Studies 1.2 (1987), 204-10 and "Consumerism reconsidered: buying and power", Cultural Studies 5.2 (1991), 157-73; Gail Reekie, Temptations: Sex, Selling and the Department Store (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Judith Williamson, Consuming Passions: The Dynamics of Popular Culture (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1986); Elizabeth Wilson, Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity (London: Virago, 1985).

13. Alice Jardine, Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985). Further references in parentheses in the text.

14. Major redefinitions of the historical fields of modernism and modernity have been published since Gynesis first appeared, including: Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Giuliana Bruno, Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Rey Chow, Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Rita Felski, The Gender

of Modernity (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1995); Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1993); Jane Hardy, J.V.S. Megaw and M. Ruth Megaw, eds, The Heritage of Namatjira: The Watercolourists of Central Australia (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1992); Barbara Johnson, A World of Difference (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Patricia Mellencamp, Indiscretions: Avant-Garde Film, Video, and Feminism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1990); Toni Morrison, Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992); Deborah E. McDowell, "The Changing Same": Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995); Patrice Petro, Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Griselda Pollock, Vision & Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art (London and New York: Routledge, 1988); Ileana Rodriguez, House/Garden/Nation: Space, Gender and Ethnicity in Postcolonial Latin American Literatures by Women (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994); Bonnie Kime Scott, The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Hortense J. Spillers, ed., Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text (New York and Routledge, 1991); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (New York and London, 1987); Michele Wallace, Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory (London: Verso, 1990).

15. Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, Creating A Nation (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1994); Rita Huggins and Jackie Huggins, Auntie Rita (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994); Kerreen M. Reiger, The Disenchantment of The Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940, Oxford University Press, 1985; Henry Reynolds, With the White People (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990); Ileana Rodriguez, House/Garden/Nation: Space, Gender and Ethnicity in Postcolonial Latin American Literatures by Women (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

16. Françoise van Rossum-Guyon, "Questions à Julia Kristeva -- A partir de Polylogue", Revue des sciences humaines 168 (1977), 495-501.

17. See John Frow, "Accounting for tastes: some problems in Bourdieu's sociology of culture", Cultural Studies 1.1 (1987), 59-73.

18. George Sternlieb and James W. Hughes, "Introduction: The Uncertain Future of Shopping Centers", in Sternlieb and Hughes (eds), Shopping Centers, U.S.A (Rutgers, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1981), 3.

19. For a study of links between community politics, tourism, and difference-promotion, see Gay Hawkins, From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing Community Arts (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

20. John A. Dawson, Shopping Centre Development (London and New York: Longman 1983), ch. 7.

21. Victor Gruen and Larry Smith, Shopping Towns U.S.A. (New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1960), 11. Gruen is widely regarded as the inventor of the modern enclosed mall, and his book was influential on subsequent accounts; see, for example, Nadine Beddington, Design for Shopping Centres (London: Butterworth Scientific, 1982), 22.

22. For a negotiation of the gap between these two forms, see William Severini Kowinski's "odyssey" of shopping centre life in the U.S.A., The Malling of America: An Inside Look At The Great Consumer Paradise (New York: William Morrow, 1985).

23. Walter Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," One-Way Street and Other Writings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: New Left Books, 1979), 293-346; Donald Horne, Money Made Us (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976); Quarry, see n.5 above.

24. Amos Rapoport, The Meaning of the Built Environment; A Nonverbal Communication Approach (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982). For Rapoport:

... meanings are in people, not in objects or things. However things do elicit meanings ... Put differently, the question is how (and, of course, whether) meanings can be encoded in things in such a way that they can be decoded by intended users. (19)
In this approach, "meanings" are treated as independently existing variables exchanged, or channelled, between autonomous subjects. In spite of his stress on "nonverbal communication", Rapoport's concept of meaning corresponds exactly to the conventional conduit model of verbal communication. See Briankle Chang, Deconstructing Communication (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

25. De Certeau, 115-131.

26. Viewed mostly at home on video, contemporary genre "cinema" often uses the shopping centre as a site to explore not only the spatial structuring of power relations in communities (as in the Cynthia Rothrock vehicle directed by Kevin Hooks, Irresistible Force), but also temporal paradoxes and logics of history; George Romero's Dawn of the Dead, Peter Hyams's Time Cop. On the cinema-shopping nexus, see Anne Friedburg, Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

27. John Carroll, "Shopping World: An Afternoon in the Palace of Modern Consumption", Quadrant, August 1979, 15.

28. A standard definitional text for the 1970s period is the Shopping Center Development Handbook (Washington DC: Urban Land Institute, 1977).

29. It is well worth consulting the older American and British works on shopping centre development to see this class and race-specific history emerging as the "universal" story of a commercial building form: G. Baker and B. Funaro, Shopping Centers, Design and Operation (New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1951); Wilfred Burns, British Shopping Centers (London: Leonard Hill, 1959); James Hornbeck, Stores and Shopping Centers (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962); Colin S. Jones, Regional Shopping Centres (London: Business Books, 1969); Louis G. Redstone, New Dimensions in Shopping Centers and Stores (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973). See also J.M. Freeland, Architecture in Australia: A History (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1972), ch. 14. In Australia, the postwar "flight" from the inner-city was in many cases a forced march imposed on long-established, ethnically diverse working class communities by state policy as well as by spiralling real estate values.

30. "From Dust to Shops", Courier-Mail 26 Feb. 1969; "Mini-city to open -- July 8", Courier-Mail, 7 April 1970; and a Courier-Mail story on 6 March, 1980, in which Alderman Sallyanne Atkinson, "a campaigner for the preservation of Queensland buildings", claimed that the mobility of Queensland houses was one of their special virtues ("'Many weatherboard homes in Queensland are unique because they can be moved,' she said. 'Many occupy prime real estate sites that are tremendously valuable'"). Alderman Atkinson eventually located her office in Indooroopilly shoppingtown, and became Mayor of Brisbane.

31. Courier-Mail 2 July, 1968.

32. On the minor, see ch. 4 below, and my "'Too Soon, Too Late': Reading Claire Johnston, 1970-81", Dissonance: Feminism and the Arts 1970-90 ed. Catriona Moore (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 126-138.

33. On the need for a useful model of social activism that expands the "theoretical repertoire" of cultural studies, see Ruth Barcan, "A Symphony of Farts: Saul Alinsky, Social Activism and Carnavalesque Transgression", The UTS Review: Cultural Studies and New Writing 1.1 (1995), 83-92.

34. The most powerful "post-polemical" model that I know, and one of the few that can really claim to have had practical effects, is Eric Michaels's work with Aboriginal media: The Aboriginal Invention of Television in Central Australia 1982-1986 (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986); Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). Unlike many exponents of consumer creativity, Michaels is not primarily interested the appropriation of Western media products but in Aboriginal media processes -- that is, in a politics of making and distributing programs rather than reading texts. However, it is not obvious to me (though I wish it was) how this model can be transposed from TV to other sites of agency, like shopping (so readily collapsed with media systems by the feel-good use of terms like "consumption", "practice", "agency") and from Warlpiri to white working class social forms. Moreover, as Alec McHoul points out, Michaels' achievement rests in practice on reinstating a "narrow analytic focus on production"; "The Styles of Eric Michaels: A Rhetorical Analysis", Continuum 3.2 (1990), 104.

35. Personal communication.

36. In view of my claims about the difficulty of spotting Green Hills from the highway, I should stress that this photograph is taken from a peripheral access road.

37. Maitland's population at this time was hovering around 30,000, while Newcastle's was edging towards a quarter of a million.

38. As in so many cases of "natural disaster", these floods were intensified and channelled by economically motivated human engineering. In 1955, levee banks on the Hunter River directed the greatest volume of water away from farms and towards shops and working-class housing.

39. For example, Maitland Mercury, 18 April 1969 on Sydney's Roselands ("it could be Japan, but it's not..."); and 23 October 1969, on American children being taken 16 miles in their pyjamas to a 24-hour Foodland "in the middle of the night". Like news features today about advanced users of the Internet and the "information superhighway", these stories were little etiquette guides telling their readers how to behave when they had an opportunity.

40. Andrew Wernick, "Sign and Commodity: Aspects of the Cultural Dynamic of Advanced Capitalism", Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory 8.1-2 (1984), 31.

41. Horne, ch. 8.
42. My thanks to Louise Johnson for pointing out to me the possibility of this interpretation.
43. On economic rationalism, see ch. 5 below.
44. Robin Boyd, The Australian Ugliness (Ringwood and Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1963), 105.
45. Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flaneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity", Theory Culture & Society 2.3 (1985), 37-46.
46. Terry Eagleton, Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism (London: Verso and NLB, 1981), 27.
47. The first version of this chapter was given as a paper to the "Feminist Criticism and Cultural Production" conference, Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1986. My thanks to Susan Magarey and Susan Sheridan.

Chapter Three

ON THE BEACH

On the Beach: A Bicentennial Poem

2

(after Juan Davila)

astonished
trade union delegates
watch a man behead a chicken
in Martin Place - isn't there
a poem about this
& the shimmering ideal
of just walking down the street?
not being religious
we bet on how many full circles
the headless chook will complete
& won't this do for a formal
model of Australia, not
too far-fetched, not too cute?

John Forbes, The Stunned Mullet (1988)¹

On an Australian beach on a hot summer day
people doze in the sun or shoot the breakers like
Hawaiian princes on pre-missionary Waikiki. The
symbol is too far fetched for Australian taste. The
image of Australia is of a man in an open-necked
shirt solemnly enjoying an ice-cream. His kiddy is

beside him.

Donald Horne, The Lucky Country (1964)²

Home

Some images die hard. By the mid 1960s -- when it was still possible for a white social critic unselfconsciously to compare post-colonial Australians to "pre-missionary" Hawaiians, then fix as the image of the nation a portrait of "a man" with child -- the habit of keeping (and killing) chickens was beginning to disappear from the everyday domestic life of most less-than-princely Australians. Today, Donald Horne's "symbols" seem as remote and quaint as the cock crows that can sometimes still be heard in the middle of inner-city Sydney. Yet today, a problem of nationality can still be framed as a scene of white, male Ordinariness; still today, a subject in a state of confusion may dispassionately be described as "running round like a headless chook".

I have an interest in certain modes of persistence (narrative, rhetorical, generic modes, which I also take more broadly to be practices of change) at work in mediated cultures,³ and in this chapter I want to frame an account of some problems of history persisting in cultural studies by reading back and forth between two quite different texts about that historic national Ordinary.

In the process, the relations I construct between a passage of The Lucky Country and a poem published a quarter of a century later may be far-fetched, but not altogether forced.

Both texts are generically marked as beach scenes, although it is important that "Martin Place" in Sydney is a downtown pedestrian mall. Both imagine Australia as a womanless, colour-less space: "Hawaiian" for Horne in 1964 means "suntanned" and, if a group of trade union delegates in 1988 might well be as mixed as a crowd on the beach, gender and race are unmarked by Forbes as they were ignored by Horne. But both texts offer little allegories of Democracy: each composes a model and then deals critically with it (Horne by correcting himself, Forbes by faking questions), and it is important that what Horne finds "too far fetched" about his own simile is not really its exoticism, still less the displacement of "Aboriginal" that "Hawaiian" effects and represses, but the romantic anachronism, "princes". This is the political figure that he replaces with "a man in an open-necked shirt"; this is the kind of rhetorical extravagance that John Forbes' poem, more sardonically, aspires to avoid. Both texts, then, are concerned with "taste", and with limits and limitations in a dominant -- not marginal -- popular aesthetic.

Both The Lucky Country and Forbes' poem "2 (after Juan Davila)" are also involved in social narratives of foundation -- and I must now establish some differences between them.

Published during the Bicentenary, The Stunned Mullet & Other Poems could easily be described as a "critique" of the national myths of white Australian culture. It may be more precise to think of it as a collection of puzzling little scenes -- domestic, political, artistic and economic as well

as historical -- connecting up in a discourse on a vast, multi-media public enterprise of narration. Monumental national histories appeared to mark the Bicentenary; media organisations funded re-enactments, mini-series, documentaries galore; communities and individuals created a boom in diverse forms of family, local, regional and ethnic history. In a way, The Stunned Mullet is a survival guide for living in the midst of all that speech.

Literally a fish knocked semi-conscious (the title poem begins "lips bruised blue/ from the impact of the shore"), "The Stunned Mullet" is a phrase alluding to a vernacular myth about speech and stupefaction. It usually occurs in the simile "like a stunned mullet"; an unflattering description of the appearance of someone else, or of oneself positioned as other, in a story. It means to be struck "dumb" (in every sense) by some little shock of history -- to fall right out of ordinary speech. This is an experience of liminality, but a modest one: it isn't tragic, like Lyotard's "différend", or heroic, like Deleuzian "stammering"; it is not a question of incommensurability between discourses, nor of using a major language in a revolutionary minor mode, but just a matter of momentarily losing it (and nothing of major significance is expected to follow from this; it is not a "subversive" moment, but an interruptive one). In Forbes' book, however, the mullet aspires to eloquence; the poems "form words you applaud/ because, after all, a fish is speaking".

"2 (after Juan Davila)" is from On The Beach: A Bicentennial Poem, a sequence of six texts in which the male

Anglo-Celtic poet succeeds in failing his national "vocation" to speak in honour of the occasion; the first line of "1" is, "Your vocation calls" (65). He works through various "models" of Australia and of a Laureate enunciative posture -- taken from pop-historical images, paintings, tourist spectacles, TV shows, incidents in the street -- and only in the last poem, "6", is a "blank, cut-up sense of what your vocation is going to be" glimpsed as emergent in the half-light of a beach pub lounge, an ordinary space "where you first dreamt up/ this model of the Ocean/ & watched it slide, slowly at first/ down the beach & into the surf". The cultural landscape of On The Beach is, like colonial history, neither womanless nor "white"; the scene considered by poem "2" is, and I will return to it later.

If John Forbes' text is troubled about a white male poet's public role at a festival of origins, Donald Horne is comfortably regarded by many Australians as an ideal model of a "public intellectual", and The Lucky Country is now being canonised by some as a founding text of cultural studies.⁴ In retrospect, it seems to present itself as such ("I came back from a trip to the Far East early in 1963 and decided that Australia was worth a book" [13]), and while Money Made Us (1976) in fact gave more emphasis to what we now call cultural practices ("systems of honour, rhetoric, life-styles, cults, entertainments etc"),⁵ The Lucky Country's success at analysing these in a best-selling social critique of institutions and protocols of conduct has made it an influential work long after the society it criticised has

disappeared. Now that the phrase "the lucky country" has passed into everyday language, it has lost the biting irony that Horne himself intended -- and which "Lucky Country", a scathing song by Midnight Oil, naively later restored.

Yet I know few people (to be honest, no-one) now poring over The Lucky Country with the same intensity that others accord to rereading Raymond Williams' Culture and Society. Horne's practice is made canonical, rather than his theses: seeing culture as a field of action, he has worked as a mainstream tabloid journalist, a powerful newspaper and magazine editor, a literary autobiographer, essayist and novelist, a historian, an academic and, in recent years, as a prominent cultural policy-maker. Of course, Horne did not found the possibility of his own practice; something about Australian society made his model of action both practicable and influential, and he is not the only eminent intellectual to operate in this way. But The Lucky Country as a myth of origins for Cultural Studies 1990 is not an arbitrary choice. Part of its interest now is that it was written as a critical document for a better future in which "it might be of interest to know what the huge continent was like in those early days in the nineteen sixties before it was peopled from all over Asia" (13).

Forbes' poem and Horne's book do not have the same kind of relationship to foundation narratives (On The Beach is about one such narrative, The Lucky Country is a pretext for another), any more than they have a common posture about the terms of their own participation in Australian public life.

Horne is an affirmative and canny populist, or a "middlebrow" in the special, positive sense that Andrew Ross has given that term.⁶ Reading a Forbes poem is like sharing the secret thoughts of an edgy, sceptical citizen whom canny populism addresses, and sometimes claims to represent.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to exaggerate these differences. Both writers are inventors of imaginary countries; both work in the "future perfect", in Jane Gallop's sense.⁷ Both are also masters of one of the dominant registers of public rhetoric in Australia, "irony". Both men could therefore be described as working within a "great tradition" of Australian cultural criticism. So rather than resolve their differences formally as an opposition, I want to accept the tension between them as productive. Like the debate in cultural studies over "policy" and "aesthetics" -- a model of which I shall also derive by reading Horne and Forbes -- this tension in fact creates a space in which I can place my work.

It is tempting to say, the space. I'm well aware that the methodological refusal to choose which I've just performed also resonates for me with broader and deeper influences: I see myself as a rhetorical critic, The Stunned Mullet as a model text; I, too, idealise Donald Horne's practice, and The Lucky Country was one of the great revelations of my early adolescence -- the "origin" (it would be easy to say) of a desire that was later to become my interest in cultural studies.

But I do mean "a space". I use these texts here to create what Deleuze and Guattari call a home. In their sense of the

term, "home does not pre-exist"; it is the product of an effort "to organize a limited space",⁸ and the limit involved is not a figure of containment but of provisional or "working" definition. This kind of home is always made of mixed components, and the interior space it creates is a filter or a sieve rather than a sealed-in consistency; it is not a place of origin, but an "aspect" of a process which it enables ("as though the circle tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working forces it shelters") but does not precede -- and so it is not an enclosure, but a way of going outside.

The family romance

Why put forward The Lucky Country (in however cagey a manner) as a text of comparable historical importance to that of Culture and Society for "others"? If this is a gesture of reactive nationalism, or even just a shorthand way of insisting on the complex historical parameters of specific conditions for action, then any one of a number of institutionally honoured texts might conceivably serve the same purpose -- Phillips' The Australian Tradition: Studies in a Colonial Culture (1958), Russel Ward's The Australian Legend (1958), the essays of Ian Turner or even the conservative symposium edited by Peter Coleman, Australian Civilization (1962). I could justify my choice -- only Horne's text unequivocally looks forward to that ambiguous ideology of State that we now call multiculturalism -- but it is the

purpose that I want to consider.

At an international conference held in 1990 at the University of Western Sydney, there was a discussion about why so many people working in quite different contexts had all begun "inventing histories" for cultural studies -- often by reifying quite dispersed fields ("Birmingham", "Frankfurt", "Radical Nationalism") or by (de)sanctifying the works of various founding fathers ("Williams", "Gramsci", "Horne", "Innis"). Those who stressed the idea of invention felt that, whatever the dangers of myth-making this kind of history entailed, it was an important way in which new projects in cultural studies, and "new" subjects of history, could polemically be defined. For others, it ran the risk of reproducing the worst idealist forms of the History of Ideas, or of substituting history of Theory for empirical studies of culture, or else of performing relentlessly Oedipal disavowals of the most useful work of the past.

It was left to Dipesh Chakrabarty, a professional historian, to suggest that the real problem may be that the genre in which "histories" are being invented for cultural studies often leads people into positing a single origin for their practice -- something which those same people would never do in any other context.⁹

Thinking about my own sporadic impulses to claim some looming historical precedent authorising me to speak, it occurred to me that for the Euro-centred tradition of cultural studies from which I do speak, this genre has a name -- the family romance. The family romance is a type of phantasy in

which the subject "imagines that his [sic] relationship to his parents has been modified", usually for the better; for example, that he is adopted or illegitimate, and that his father was actually a prince (perhaps a "Hawaiian prince").¹⁰ In other words, the family romance is a way of "inventing history" that allows us not only to change but to improve upon the received and socially sanctioned versions of our beginnings.

The cultural pressure exerted by this genre (which adults rarely practise consciously but which lingers on as a symptomatic archaism) may possibly be felt in the common assumption that any history involving masculine proper names is necessarily obsessed with paternity and filiation. In fact, you can write a history of power relations without having a thing about ancestry. The cultural temptation of the family romance can certainly be read, however, in attempts to do this by installing a local hero in the place of the founding figures already promoted by powerful interests elsewhere; people say that Donald Horne, for example, has always practised cultural studies in "everything but name". The subsequent move to name the "real" (new, improved) Father is not peculiar to intellectuals inventing histories for peripheral national cultures. It is how Frank Lentricchia frames much of his reading of Kenneth Burke against Paul de Man in Criticism and Social Change, and it is a strategy that Terry Eagleton uses regularly to redeem for "English" and Marxism selected aspects of post-structuralist critical theory.

Why is this temptation so tempting? In Roman des origines et origines du roman -- an essentialist study projecting the structure of a Freudian myth onto the history of the European novel -- Marthe Robert suggests that for children, the family romance is a response to a moment of grave crisis at the end of the idyll of infancy when social experience brings deflating intimations that other people exist. Glorious plenitude gives way to unflattering comparisons, and the glow of eternity is replaced by the "murky reality" of time.¹¹ Telling foundling stories is a way of coping by denying the logic of this experience; the family romance is a conservative as well as a nostalgic genre because it allows the child "to mature while refusing to progress". The discovery of sexuality then turns it into an active defence against difference: once uncertain paternity, rather than parentage, becomes the object of imaginative work, a new opposition between the feminine (the child's "intimate and trivial" world) and the masculine ("distant and noble") then opens up the possibility of "romanesque" adventure.

In spite of the problems with this account, in which "the child" is really an allegory of certain aspects of imperialism, it has some resonance with the dilemmas of practising cultural studies in an international frame, though strictly a resonance only; a discipline (if this is in fact what cultural studies has become) is not a personality. But for practitioners, some of whom remember cultural studies as a "project" on a much more intimate scale, the family-romantic genre can indeed provide a defence against the "difference"

introduced by even a limited degree of internationalisation -- a process that not only brings to bear certain "global" market pressures, but also brings into contact groups who may inhabit the same nation but never ordinarily meet. Many cultural studies conferences create a landscape of astonishment like a John Forbes poem, where bizarre non-encounters between incommensurable identities are made meaningful only by an effort to do something with the startling fact that they can occupy the same space.

I feel at home in a John Forbes landscape, and yet I want to ask whether there is always something wrong with a defensive response to its tensions. I find the family romance tempting at times. It works, trans-nationally, as a shorthand or metonymic way of claiming a difference to be constructed; precisely because of its currency, I can more easily envisage using it to present a critical reading of The Lucky Country than I could face embarking in a foreign context on an analysis (with every second word requiring an elaborate gloss, or leading into labyrinths of explanation where I might be the first to lose sight of the point of my beginning) of the intricate debates of Australian social criticism in the 1950s and 1960s -- and the struggles for political and institutional power in which these were enmeshed.¹²

Yet without some reference to those distant struggles then -- without the bitter battles over mass non-"British" immigration that helped to double the population, without the slow dying of the White Australia policy, without the re-emergence of demands for Aboriginal citizenship rights,

without the conflict between parents with a fading allegiance to Britain or Ireland, and children born, like myself, under the constraints and cultural incentives of the American Alliance, without the class, ethnic and religious Cold War between proponents of Rome and Moscow that tore the Labor Party apart while critics from all sides attacked the culture being created (in fibro or red brick houses each on a quarter acre block, perhaps a chookyard still down the back) by the rurally-based affluence of the suburban working class -- it is hard to make sense of the political context of cultural studies in an altered Australia now. General invocations of class-race-gender as "global" universals are not, in the end, transnationally sufficient for much more than making gestures of good will.

Then again, Graeme Turner has pointed out that there can be good reasons for defensiveness in an economic landscape of "internationalisation".¹³ In material conditions where only one national publisher vaguely interested in the field, Allen & Unwin (a commercial press), survives after the corporate mergers and take-overs of the 1980s, the word "international" comes to work in cultural studies as it does in the film and record industries -- as a euphemism for a process of streamlining work to be "interesting" to American and European audiences according to a commercial judgment of what those interests are. "Imperialism" is at once too strong and too vague as a name for this process; our governments gladly espouse it as an export strategy for the arts as well as research, and it is consistent with the broader drift of

national policy-making in Australia as in other countries. It is also a new development insofar as it no longer blocks the circulation of Australian work as "too specific" for readers elsewhere. Instead, it moves to influence what we should be producing here.¹⁴

For those who maintain an activist view of their practice this is a troubling tendency, especially for work on gender, race and class: after all, this is the "internationalism" that gave us Tina Turner instead of Justine Saunders as queen of the Outback in Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome, and which may foster the "strategic" adoption in cultural studies of saleable rhetorics with tenuous links indeed to Australian social conditions. British assumptions about class have played this role in the past, American constructions of race and "identity" are doing so at present. The interesting question for the future, then, is how to act in this situation without inventing less a history than a new nostalgia for an unchanging, introverted (and imaginary) national culture.

There are two corollaries of this shift in the realpolitik of cultural studies. One is that the text/ethnography debate has actually intensified a drift away from the concrete values that ethnographers like to invoke; as Graeme Turner remarks, in practice "the current unfashionableness of historicized textual readings of specific instances of Australian media production has resulted in a net reduction of useful work on Australian texts, ... practices and ... ideological formations" (7). The other is that a particular kind of "Theory" is privileged; working from a core

of American and European references, liberally employing metonyms of wider debates ("difference", "pleasure", "subversion") that will signify the text's cross-cultural intelligibility, it may do its real work obliquely, drifting casually in and out of de-historicised "local" contexts. Other practices are then pushed for methodological reasons into the dead zone of the "too specific", or else are obliged to make a home in more cosmopolitan disciplines -- History, Comparative Literature, Cinema Studies, English.

Since these pressures on intellectual production do not evenly apply to Australian society at large, their first consequence for cultural studies is, Turner suggests, "a real danger of becoming academically entrenched but socially and politically irrelevant" (7). It is not that the academy poses a threat to some pristine radicality, but rather that the conditions in which academics now operate will shape their work in particular, and in this case limiting, ways. These are the conditions in which a defensive response to "difference" (in fact, to economic inequalities and power imbalances) can be quite reasonable, and in which a project of inventing history by creating an alternative myth of origins for cultural studies "in one country" can sometimes seem to be a locally empowering option.

However the trouble with the family romance is precisely, as Chakrabarty points out, its structural need to inscribe an emblematic singularity -- "one" country, therefore one origin -- as the source of its cultural authority. I have mentioned only the Anglo-Celtic masculine possibilities dear

to nationalist thinking; it would theoretically be possible to produce "alternative" alternatives, foregrounding figures suppressed by our once dominant radical tradition but crucial to Koori, feminist and immigrant constructions of Australian history. It is unlikely, however, that even separatist versions of such histories could effectively be written in the form of family romance (and so this is not the context to offer some examples). For only from a position of violent nostalgia for an imaginary British country pre-dating World War Two is it possible to ignore the plurality and mixity of origins that constitutes the nation.¹⁵

In the repertoire of canonical images of Australia there is a famous painting by Charles Meere called Australian Beach Pattern (1938-40). It is a family scene, and while it models its images of strong, healthy, carefree Ordinary Australians in the late 1930s on the heroic postures of European Classicism rather than tourist dreams of a vanished Hawaii, it is also an allegory of Democracy. The value of analysing the forms in which cultural histories have been composed was emphasised in a 1988 photograph by Anne Zahalka, which "redid" Australian Beach Pattern by substituting for its figures representatives of all the peoples that have long inhabited Australia (and enjoyed themselves at the beach). With this simple gesture, something often unremarked about Meere's painting became apparent.¹⁶ His noble, athletic Australians were not "European" gods and goddesses. They were Aryan.

The obvious beach

One of the most genuinely "popular" forms of cultural studies in Australia is the kind of myth analysis that favours making paradigms of national cultural topoi. Books about national culture are often criticised for essentialism, and for nostalgic sentimentality. They are also often best-sellers, and are very widely read.

In this kind of cultural studies, "the beach" has figured often enough to earn a disclaimer in an essay prefacing a recent book in the genre by a British immigrant, Stephen Knight's The Selling of the Australian Mind. Knight's tale of arrival and culture shock begins with two other such topoi, "the airport" and "the pub", but he quickly removes from his frame of future reference "those obvious things like sport, the beach, the car, the clothes, tourist sites and sounds"; his themes will be derived from his own urban middle class life "in the business of education and literature".¹⁷ His book is an alternative to the pub-beach-barbecue paradigm explored by a text which Knight does not mention, Myths of Oz by John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner.

Knight's essays are delightful and persuasive. Instead of rehearsing the given features of a "lifestyle" ideology, he organises his studies of places and practices around problems that are commonly discussed in the mainstream media: the "determinedly secular" ethos of Australian society; the deep refusal of patriotism that sometimes prompts our governments to sponsor corrective campaigns; the politics of literacy; the greed of the 1980s; "the growing confrontation with race, history, possession and power" (9). In this way, Knight treats

critical activity as an aspect of the culture that he criticises, and as a part of the everyday lives of the public whom he addresses. This allows him to overcome that anxiety of critical "position" endemic to topical myth analysis, which Barthes described in Mythologies (1957) as an agonised alienation but which is now more often resolved by an act of identification between the critic and "the people".

Knight is not content, however, to exclude those things that play no part in his own experience. He dismisses sport-beach-car-clothes-tourism as, in his view, superficial (without "much significance in the deep-laid realities of life in this country"), and as external -- "part of a carapace of materialism which any vertebrate structure of analysis and culture needs to crack open for the life inside" (7). His mistrust of materialism aligns him here with past critics of Australian hedonism like Ronald Conway (The Great Australian Stupor, 1971; Land of the Long Weekend, 1978), although he does not share their conservatism, and it leads him to ignore the constructive projects of the 1960s which, like The Lucky Country, sought to analyse, rather than celebrate, popular materialism as the basis for a new democratic model of social and political life.¹⁸ It also makes his book indirectly a polemic against Myths of Oz, which presents the beach as both "a national institution" and a myth complex enough not only to negotiate "the deep biblical opposition between land and sea, or the basic anthropological one between culture and nature", but to offer, via "the politics of pleasure" and "overflowing meanings", the possibility of "subversive" surf.¹⁹

I have no great sympathy for the idea that going surfing is subversive. Yet I think there is a problem with dismissing "obvious things" if we take them to be, as Knight does, inessential. I must admit to a bias here. The beach for me has always been a "deep-laid", and thus ambiguous, reality of life, and my own disinterest in sub-cultures is probably due to a youth spent admiring my boyfriends' surfboards in an era when girls didn't ride. But when I read Knight's dedication, "For Margaret, who kept me here", I realise that were I to make such a tribute I could say, most sincerely, "For the beach". So I am shocked by Knight's judgment, and I want to argue with it; on the beach, he might have learned something about spirituality in our "secular" society (many Australians, I think, are pantheists), and so something more about the lack of patriotic feeling for anything much besides sport. But, even as I think these things, I am more uneasy with the myth-making mode I slip into than I am with Knight's view of the beach. This is the usual problem with myth analyses when they are (as they were not by Barthes) unified by a strict thematics, like "subculture", or "nation": personal observation soon becomes imperious generalisation.

However, my real problem with Knight's surface/essence, outside/inside metaphysic of cultural "significance" is the question that it begs. Why is the beach now such an "obvious thing"? for whom is it obvious, and how? It is plausible to say that the pop-cultural myth of the beach has a fragile importance indeed for other orders of Australian reality; a historian (for whom "the beach", via Myths of Oz, meant

"cultural studies") once told me irritably that "most Australians don't go to the beach", and for him this simply proved that "people in cultural studies don't do any research". But we still do have to account for its massive, obsessive inscription: tourism, fashion, softdrink and sanitary napkin commercials aside, a vast anthology could be compiled of beach scenes from literature, cinema, photography, painting, theatre, television drama and documentary, newspapers and magazines. How is this without "significance"?

In fact, Myths of Oz shares with The Selling of the Australian Mind the view that there is something misleading about the beach as promoted by the culture industries. For Knight, it belongs with many other things to a post-War ideology of consumerism which did "special damage" in a country where "the ideology of the collective" had been so strong; "it was an overthrow of the material poverty of most of previous Australian life and of the systems of public self-help, which in this austere environment had emerged earlier than in the rest of the world". (5) So the "obvious" beach is at odds with historic social values which may still live on under the carapace of materialism. For Fiske, Hodge and Turner, media images "colonize" the surf by imposing upon it the meanings of a "culturally dominant class". For them the mediated or "suburban" beach is at odds with the resistant force of the subcultural or "surfing" beach -- its "closeness to nature". For them, the mythic Nature promoted by the media is different from the surfing "natural" ("physical sensation, and ... the pleasure that this produces"). In other words,

both texts oppose an image to a deeper (Knight) or other (Fiske et al.) reality. Cultural studies is then a means of gaining access to that reality.

Epistemological issues aside, there is a complicated problem here about the relation between cultural studies and history, and how self-reflexive we need to be about considering that relation. I suspect that however we may praise or denigrate the beach as a mythic signifier, a sensual/spiritual experience or a complex ethnographic object (surfers, "materialism", men eating icecreams with their children), we certainly do not do so now from a space "outside" a history in which discourse about real and imaginary beaches has an intense significance for Australian intellectuals, especially those for whom the popular is an object of study as well as a condition of everyday living. This is a history which in fact has a great deal to do with that "growing confrontation with race, history, possession and power", thus with the position from which "we" speak, and Knight's text, at least, is aware of this; the title of his prefatory essay and the subtitle of his book is "From First Fleet to Third Mercedes" (emphasis mine).

It is not tautological or precious here to speak of history confronting history. Many traditional narratives of Australian history would always begin at the beach: until the 1970s, white historians regularly assumed that only when the convicts arrived on "the fatal shore" did time and "history proper" begin in "the timeless land". One of the most important histories we have of the Enlightenment, Bernard

Smith's European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850, is lavishly supplied with beach scenes -- traces of a scientific and artistic struggle to confront the radically different and to convert it into "the other". It probably isn't abusive to speak of a primal scene: sexuality and violence are often at stake when people wonder about "first contact" between the Eora and the British, or what happened on the beach, when, after months at sea, female convicts were released to share a borderless prison with male convicts, sailors, soldiers; as Paul Carter points out in The Road to Botany Bay, the most chaste of narrative historians will write these "scenes" as though there was someone else there, looking on.²⁰

It was in confrontation with this kind of history that Eric Willmot observed his 1986 Boyer Lectures for ABC Radio, Australia: The Last Experiment, that Botany Bay 1788 is not necessarily the best "marker" of beginnings for a "polygeneric society".²¹ The fourth lecture, "Lucky Country Dreaming", suggests that only in Arnhem Land in 1802 was a scene set "for all the actors of Modern Australia". Willmot's scene is not a fantasy of guilty or anxious presence. He speaks simply of history as a book, and of a page with Aboriginal Australians "looking out to sea", a Macassan ship returning "for the season's fishing", and a British ship appearing for the first time in the bay. The Macassans, coming and going for centuries in the cosmopolitan North, were always ignored by an Anglo imaginary mesmerised by its own "fatal" shore; only when they are represented do "the Europeans, the Asians and the Australians all meet on the shores of the Southland". This

reminder that at least three peoples could have occupied a given historical space "from the beginning" does not deny tragedy, violence and conflict. It does try to change what the history of that space may be in future.

My point is certainly not that we cannot write about beach culture without taking all this on board, although I do think that there are often involuntary resonances when people imagine the beach in Australia to offer utopian potential for a naturally natural "nature". My point is that Willmot's use of the beach as simultaneously a positive cultural value and a historical image which is already involved in the critical debates and political conflicts of contemporary Australia may point to a more complex project for cultural studies than the elaboration of paradigmatically "given" (sub)cultural or national topics -- without denying the value of these, or indeed their cultural power.

In this spirit, it may be more useful to think of the beach as a chronotope rather than as a topos or myth. Bakhtin's famous "unit of analysis" based on variable time-space ratios can carry its own essentialist charge, but it does allow us to deal with the density and volatility of cultural reference systems without either bringing an impossible totality relentlessly to bear on every single occasion (each stray beach postcard a guilty symptom of colonialism) or creating those spatialised paradigms of popular practice which so idealise and purify an atomised present (sport/beach/car) that they may function as defensive guarantees of perfect historical innocence. The beauty of the

concept of chronotope is to enable us think about the cultural interdependence of spatial and temporal categories in terms of variable relations.²²

One of the most powerful beach scenes I know works directly on "the beach" in this way. In my reading, it also explains why the beach may be one of the deepest-laid "realities of life" in Australia, one in terms of which the danger of dissociating the pleasures of popular culture from the political conflicts of history -- as well as a desire to do so -- is lived in the everyday.

Mudrooroo Nyoongah's "Beached Party" -- an occasional text for Australia Day (January 26) 1991 -- could be called an elegy.²³ It is certainly a mourning poem, but only in the first few lines is there a distinction between the present of the oration ("We all, all of us must have a beginning, a birth day") and the historic past ("I, we died a thousand, thousand,/ When Governor Phillip carried to terror nullus/ His ill cargo: 'I suffer, suffer -- / Why exile me here?'"). These lines already complicate the relations between a general human "we", an Aboriginal "I, we", a cited White "I", and the signature "Nyoongah": the rest of the poem shifts and stretches those relations back and forth in a crowded, flickering time-space rather like a party, where nothing so neat as a "split" subjectivity is sustained, where the mood swings wildly between benevolence, sarcasm, pity and sorrow, and where the pasts and presents of radically different temporalities spill and crash into each other.

The beached party is a mess, but it isn't chaotic. There

is a logic that holds together the "cliché" present of staged political consensus and national reconciliation, the "eternal" present of TV, tourism, beach holidays and real estate sales, and the recurring present of Aboriginal mourning, just as there is a logic able to blur but not efface the differences between the Koori, Australian, human and Nyoongah identities assumed by Mudrooroo's text. You could call it Modernity, the legacy of Enlightenment, or even just one of those contradictions abounding in popular culture. You could also call it "the environment", or "the hole in the ozone layer". Toward the end of the poem, the party scene clears for a "historical re-enactment" that is also (for "I, we") the present reality of a sacrificial scene: Governor Phillip holds "the shattered body of a Koori in his white arms slowly turning brown", while "I finger the scars of my sorrows and smile at the droppings of my tears", holding the boat steady as Phillip proffers his gifts; then as the musket speaks, "our new nation in mourning each and every year on this date" can salute the birth of its future under the deadly mid-summer sun:

As indifferent skins blister with cancerous growths
And my voice whispers a hopeful, happy birthday, Australia
While daubing sunscreen cream over the worst lesions
of my past.

"On the beach" (a tag made famous by a novel and a film about the end of the world at the ends of the earth in

Australia) is an old expression meaning beached: shipwrecked, destitute, bankrupt, abandoned, washed up. "On the beach" is also the name of a cultural framework for addressing "the state of the nation" (also the world, the human condition, public affairs, perhaps an intimate, even trivial, situation). This is why John Forbes can set part of his "On the Beach" in a crowded city street, and why Mudrooroo Nyoongah's "Beached Party" can include glimpses of the wood-chipping industry and struggles over foreign investment. In Marxian criticism, such an address is often assumed to be essentially essentialist, as well as pessimistic, and there can be good reason for this; if "Nyoongah"'s Black mourner/celebrant in anti-UV cream defines, in more ways than one, a new kind of historical subject, Forbes' bystanders casually gambling on the outcome of a certainty as though its grimness does not concern them are ancestral figures from a legend of stoic white working class "character" -- hard, cynical, soulless -- largely invented, in fascination, by intellectuals.

Yet "on the beach" is one of those phrases that can undermine itself: simply because it is used by someone who still lives to tell a tale, it may refute its own declaration of a pathetic or hopeless finality. Projected as a narrative framework, this kind of enunciative irony generates stories of encounter rather than closure, in time as well as in space. This is how Mudrooroo's appropriation of the "fatal shore" mode of Australia Day meditation involves the global human future in a recurring Koori past-present. This is also why John Forbes' "On the Beach" implies that the answer to the

question of its own small urban scenario -- "won't this do for a formal model of Australia?" -- will eventually have to be, "no".

Epiphany in Martin Place

A comic cultural encounter is already going on in John Forbes' street scene. We don't need to know exactly what it is in order to know that it is happening; something is marked by the effort of memory in the middle of the text -- "isn't there a poem about this & the shimmering ideal of just walking down the street?" -- and by the coding of the poem as a formal imitation "after Juan Davila".

There is another poem about this, or something like "this" -- a famous poem by Les Murray called "An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow". It is not about trade union delegates watching a man behead a chicken in the street (just possibly a religious rite, probably an attempt at Art, but certainly a social transgression). It is about an epiphany transfiguring an anonymous man in Martin Place with a fit of cosmic weeping. His weeping brings the city to a halt; when it is over, "he simply walks" through the crowd and away.²⁴ Les Murray is a Catholic, a celebrated poet (almost a de facto Laureate), and a conservative populist thinker in the Anglo-Celtic tradition; his collection of Poems 1961-1983 is called The Vernacular Republic.

Juan Davila is a gay Chilean-Australian artist, and Forbes' text is a tribute to his work, especially his 1982-3

history painting Fable of Australian Art, the first panel of which includes a blank canvas marked "A Republic for Australia". In the past, Davila has used transfigured Christian-colonial iconography to study sexual and cultural difference in the political economy of modernism. Some of his work in the 1980s combined the sometimes transvestite, often male Pieta with defaced Art History "signature" scenes, comic-book characters, pop icons, and figures from Tom of Finland pornography in readings of psychoanalysis; his paintings have sometimes been seized on the request of fundamentalist Christian groups. In 1982 his Stupid As A Painter, implicating Michelangelo's Pieta in a narrative called "Kiss of Spider-woman", incurred charges of obscenity; in 1988, his image Bivouac for a book of critical essays about the Bicentenary was censored lest its treatment of Governor Phillip prompt charges of lese-majesty.²⁵

While the media may frame him as inverting ordinary values, Davila is not beheading chickens to shock our sacred institutions and his art is not being framed by Forbes as a "transgression" of Les Murray's. Writing "after Juan Davila" is precisely a matter of framing itself: the metonymic flipping over of an image ("behead a chicken"/"headless chook") from one context to another in which its first meaning is not "negated" but transformed in such a way that all the relationships resulting are questioned. The principle is familiar enough to contemporary critical theory. What I may need to stress here is that this questioning comes to bear not on, say, Catholic religious beliefs (Murray's poem is just a

vague trace in Forbes') but on "the shimmering ideal of just walking down the street" -- that sacred, secular value of the Absolutely Ordinary.

This is a complicated question. Davila's work in part belongs to a broad critical movement created internationally over at least the past twenty years by people challenging the sexual, racial, ethnic and class exclusions and defacements that constitute the Ordinary. In that sense, it is inscribed in opposition to Les Murray's aesthetics (although this poem is the only instance I know of a direct contact between them). The relationship of Forbes' poem to "An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow" is a little more involved: there is a bit of "Murray" in "Forbes" (the wry turn in the phrase "not being religious" echoes the spirit as well as the syntax of Murray's marvellous last line about the weeper after his epiphany: "Evading believers, he hurries off down Pitt Street"); and while the ideal of beatified ordinariness is treated ruthlessly indeed, an aura still hangs there, "shimmering".

This is not surprising; what shimmers is a powerful mirage. For at least a century in Australia since the heyday of Henry Lawson, theologians of social democracy have seen the white male working-class Ordinary as the luminous truth of the Popular that shines through the Everyday. From D.H. Lawrence in his 1923 novel Kangaroo ("this place is meant for all one dead level sort of people") to Donald Horne in The Lucky Country ("A society whose predecessors pioneered a whole continent now appears to shun anything that is at all out of the ordinary. The trouble is that, by Australian standards,

almost everything that is now important is out of the ordinary"), critics of that democracy have reified the Ordinary as a crippling normalisation -- almost a repressive regime.²⁶ But as these two quotations suggest, the recurring critique of the Ordinary as a political culture (Lawrence accurately predicted the form that fascism here would take) and as a social philosophy (Horne predicted Australia's economic decline in an age of new technology) has not always required thinking through those exclusions on which it depends.

Cultural studies has much to learn from these not quite resolved encounters. There are always gaps and incommensurables in play between the materials of cultural critique, and it may be in working with those that critical affect is most at stake. What often interests me now is a gap between historic discourses on Australian culture (almost a second language for me, so foreign can they seem) and the trans-national critical and political discourses -- feminism, Marxism, poststructuralism -- that have worked for me as a composite mother tongue. Both are used in public culture today, the former much more widely than the latter; the work most useful to me now in cultural studies increasingly mixes them up. So I am also aware of a gap between the Australian institutional conditions that Graeme Turner has discussed and the institutional assumptions that often mark transnational criticism (absolutist distributions of the relation of theory to practice, "local" American and British methodology debates -- text vs ethnos, the literary vs the popular --

raised to the status of global human dilemmas). These experiences are productive: "gaps" do not conceal an elusive truth for the critic to pursue, but they do help to define the social conditions for inventing a critical practice.

This is not a rarefied issue. Practical problems are at stake about the politics of cultural studies in a particular social formation. In recent years, for example, we have had some discussion of the problems that follow from what Turner, reflecting back on Myths of Oz, calls the "theoretical weakness ... of wheeling in British subcultural theory to analyse mainstream Australian popular culture".²⁷ Not quite so much attention has yet been paid to the problems that follow from wheeling in the abstract aesthetic vocabulary of European modernism to theorise in Australia what that modernism (as Marshall Berman has shown) has always taken to be "the practice of everyday life" and which was historically invested here with once radical, now reactionary, nationalist populist values.²⁸ In 1990, students graduating from high schools throughout New South Wales took an English exam containing a question that I quote from memory; "'Les Murray makes the ordinary extraordinary and the extraordinary ordinary': Discuss".

This is also not exactly a "specific" Australian issue. If there is a local irony about learning the principle of "making strange" as part of a basic training in the Great Australian Ordinary, there is a broader irony about the reluctance widespread in cultural studies to question rigorously the aesthetic inheritance of frameworks now used to

analyse popular culture -- a reluctance that can be most intense in schools of media study that wouldn't for the world get involved in any talk of "art" or "literature" or in overly theoretical speculation.²⁹ Yet Ian Hunter in Culture and Government has shown, for example, just how powerful an unscrutinised Leavisite pedagogy of mutual recognition through the text ("this is so, isn't it?") has remained for a cultural studies that claims not only to discard canons, but to go "beyond" texts to study practices.

The Ordinary Australian

The point of Ian Hunter's questioning, like Juan Davila's, is not to reveal a historic complicity that requires denunciation, but to ask what follows in practice from certain "shimmering" ideals, and what might also follow from working in a different way. I want to give an example of a problem I have with an ideal of my own that Hunter's work has helped me to clarify, without, however, providing me with a solution I can accept. It arises in a two-way "gap" (for want of a better word) between the history of the Ordinary in Australian social criticism, and the concept of the everyday in European philosophy. This gap, as usual, is material as well as conceptual: the "everyday" is already a complex and well-defined problem for a huge archive of texts;³⁰ the history of the Ordinary exists only as a scattering of documents put together by "everyday knowhow". My terms, necessarily, are caught up in the problem that they try to define. I can only

gesture at my problem, and say why I think it matters.

Fortunately, an American critic provides me with an oblique but sound way of beginning. In "An Ontology of Everyday Distraction", Margaret Morse criticises the anachronism of transferring to the study of US consumer culture today the model of everyday "praxis as enunciation" developed by Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday Life.³¹ This model is only one version, I think, of one of the most powerful "modernist" themes regularly assumed by cultural studies, the "excess" of process over structure. It is not arbitrary or inconsequential that Henri Lefebvre began Everyday Life in the Modern World with a few dense pages in praise of James Joyce's Ulysses, and the "great river of Heraclitean becoming" in which, for Lefebvre, Joyce had redeemed the urban and linguistic quotidian that it helped bring into discourse.³²

Like most critics following on from Lefebvre's work, de Certeau wanted to transcend the limits of a "critique of graphic representations" that merely looks "from the shores of legibility toward an inaccessible beyond". In the "beyond" of those limits there had to be a way to read non-graphic social practices directly, yet not naively.³³ So in "Walking in the City", de Certeau proposed to "access" that beyond with his model of the pedestrian speech act. Walking could be considered as "a space of enunciation"; "walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language [langue] or to the statements uttered [énoncés proférés]". In other words, people's actions in using the city could not be predicted or

constrained by a formal power's systematic plan. With this dodgy urban/spatial projection of a linguistic/temporal concept (enunciation), that "shimmering ideal of just walking down the street" became a model of popular practice -- and critical process -- in administered societies.

In one form or another this, along with the closely related strategy/tactics distinction, has been one of the most influential models for cultural studies in recent years.³⁴ Morse wonders, however, whether de Certeau could ever have imagined, "as he wrote on walking as an evasive strategy of self-empowerment, that there would one day be video cassettes that demonstrate how to 'power' walk". She suggests that "praxis as enunciation" has dubious value as a "vision of liberation" once processes for gaining access to a beyond (in her terms, an elsewhere) have been fully "designed into the geometries of everyday life" with malls, freeways and television, and now that de Certeau's "figurative practices of enunciation ('making do', 'walking in the city', or 'reading as poaching') are modeled in representation itself" (195). In the particular time-space economy that Morse calls "everyday distraction", designer process blocks, rather than exceeds, a process/structure dynamic. There is no "escape" in designer escape, or to put it another way, nothing exceeds like designer excess.

Now, in an abstract and quite fundamental way, I doubt that I could think without a concept of enunciative praxis, and while I recognise the environment Morse describes, it is still for me a tourist experience, someone else's elsewhere,

and not my everyday life. De Certeau did not think praxis only as enunciation, a term which functions in his texts as an allegory of, and an adjunct to, other kinds of social action. But as Morse points out, de Certeau often does translate enunciation as evasion, and this is the problem; at these moments of his text, the "fugitive" nature of the speech act concerns him more than its cohesive, dialogic or referential powers.³⁵ In these moments, his work looks forward to a cultural studies that celebrates "resistance" as a programmed feature of capitalist culture rather than towards that process (cohesive, dialogic, referential) by which, as Morse puts it in her own wise vision of criticism's role in social change, "alternative values and their constituencies have labored to mark themselves in discourse" (215).

The evasive/enunciative model of the everyday, moreover, was not unique or original to Michel de Certeau. It is already at work in Lefebvre's Everyday Life in the Modern World, and the most extended elaboration of it that I know is in Maurice Blanchot's wonderful essay on "the man in the street" from 1959, "Everyday Speech". Writing about Lefebvre's earlier Critique de la vie quotidienne (1947-62), Blanchot sets out with miraculous brevity all the elements for a theoretical myth of the Evasive Everyday. In the intricate dialectic of his text (which owes little to Lefebvre's historical materialism), these elements are held together by one refrain: "the everyday escapes".³⁶ "That is its definition": it escapes all "forms or structures", all "means of communication", all "dialectical recovery", all "authority, whether it be

political, moral or religious", all division between true and false. It is pure process in excess, and it is always, like "the man in the street", potentially political. For this reason the structural "other" to the excess of everyday speech is for Blanchot, as it was for Lefebvre, a double figure: the philosopher, the man of "metalanguage" in Lefebvre's phrase, and the bureaucrat, the "man of government", in Blanchot's. For de Certeau, too, the "pedestrian speaker" confronted and evaded a twin: on the one hand, the cultural theorist; on the other, the urban planner.

This is an intense discourse of desire, and it could be analysed historically in terms of philosophical debates about the question of "the other" in post-war France. Among the texts still used in cultural studies today, the symbolic bearer of evasive everydayness shifts easily from Blanchot's "man in the street", to "the woman in the home" (Lefebvre), to de Certeau's walker, of whom the mythic projection in his text is "Man Friday on the beach". In each case, this bearer is marked as discursively other to "metalanguage" -- as female literalness (Lefebvre), as popular rumour, a discourse "without a subject" (Blanchot), or as a "savage" trace of orality in writing (de Certeau) -- while the subject marking it as such shifts between "the philosopher" in Lefebvre's formal dialogues, the speculative thinker who also lives in the everyday (Blanchot), and the professional scholar in a research institution (de Certeau).

This recurring inscription of the historic subject of meta-language -- indeed, of cultural studies -- as a white

European middle class male ("Robinson Crusoe" in de Certeau's terms) helps to explain why Wlad Godzich can argue persuasively in his preface to de Certeau's Heterologies that "this other which forces discourses to take the meandering appearance that they have is not a magical or a transcendental entity; it is the discourse's mode of relation to its own historicity in the moment of its utterance".³⁷ This is also why the "critique of everyday life" is a discourse of critical involvement, and this is also why this involvement has to take the form of an enunciative praxis.

The interesting thing for me, however, is that for all these texts this process must not extend to involvement with the one figure who in fact remains, for all three writers, indomitably "other" -- the bureaucrat. Prior to any instance of enunciative praxis, the subject of metalanguage is already split, by this discourse, between theoretical and "administrative" functions, process and structure: the latter terms are negatively valued, and the semantic attribute "political" migrates towards to the former.

Here I must mark a *first gap in my discourse, and between the materials I work with*. I turn, once more, to Donald Horne's "man in an open-necked shirt". He doesn't say much as he enjoys his ice-cream on the beach; according to legend, he is enunciatively "laconic". In spite of his setting, he is much closer to Blanchot's man in the street than he is to de Certeau's Man Friday, who hovers in his memory as some sort of exotic prince; he is totally oblivious to the woman in the home. In a way, he fits the series. But he isn't at all

evasive: his only everyday praxis is a modest material consumption, and he dislikes symbolic excesses ("too far fetched"). He is the Ordinary Australian: retired now, worried about his pension and "the Asians taking over the country"; even his old trade union mates have just wasted rank and file money on a 20-page liftout for Cleo, that yuppie female fashion magazine. In his prime, he aroused few philosophers to discourse (that would really be a bit much). But he was, and he still is, an object of intense desire for many a man of government.

On the other side of this gap, in Culture and Government, and an associated essay on "Setting Limits to Culture", Ian Hunter gives a rare defence of a bureaucratic practice.³⁸ Hunter's critical object is not the Everyday, but Culture in the emergence of English literary education. Nevertheless, his harsh account of "the gigantic ethical pincers of the dialectic" in British cultural studies has a direct bearing on the French tradition. Hunter argues that cultural studies has under-estimated its debt, via Marxism, to Romantic aesthetics, to Schiller and Hegel, and in so doing it has misrecognised its place in a history of criticism deployed in schools as an exemplary ethical practice, aimed at "forming the self". While cultural studies may claim to offer a materialist analysis of culture, and to politicise the critical process, the dialectic really functions as a virtuoso technique of "ethical athleticism" -- in fact, as "a technique for withdrawing from the discursive and institutional spheres in which cultural attributes are actually specified and formulated".³⁹ Such

spheres are primarily administrative and bureaucratic; these are the spheres of the "properly" political.

Like the related work of Tony Bennett and other theorists of policy⁴⁰, this argument raises some awkward questions about the "critique of everyday life". Its vulnerability to Hunter's polemic only begins with the way it has so often defined its own processes as well as its objects as necessarily "evasive", even as precluded by definition from occupying those "spheres" of planning and administration. In the light of Hunter's history, critical "praxis as enunciation" can suddenly look like ethical consent to the status quo. This confirms the disquiets of my own experience by showing how and why the Romantic inheritance in cultural studies works to create a "fraught space" of ethical grandiloquence in which massive, world-historical problems are histrionically debated on such a level of generality that they cannot possibly be solved, and posed in ways which do not, will not and cannot ever connect to agencies by which actual social futures may be given a "definite shape". In the name of politics, this praxis enunciates a spiral from, as Tony Bennett puts it, "big debate to big debate": always swinging between activist desire and angst about its own effects, it has the form of precisely the doomed circularity that is known in everyday language as running round like a headless chook.

I have deep reservations about this thesis. Yet one of many things that attracts me to it is its compatibility both with recent feminist work that rethinks "praxis as enunciation" precisely through a pre-Kantian concept of ethics

as, in Moira Gatens' phrase, "crucially concerned with the specificity of one's embodiment",⁴¹ and with the value that radical pedagogies have always attached, both in and out of school, to a "virtuoso" collective praxis aimed precisely at "(re)forming the self". Rather than dismissing these, Hunter's argument simply cautions some "ethical modesty" about what they can achieve.⁴² But then I am not sure how much is to be gained by de-politicising as "ethical" whole areas of intellectual practice where people are routinely confronting relations and structures of power; whether culture in media societies can be considered "rare" in the sense that Hunter assumes; whether any "self" can be so singular and orderly that its functions are neatly separable, ethics here, politics there; and whether enunciation in a discourse-administered society can ever be restricted to an "ethical" technique.

Now I want to look back across that gap, where uncanny memories are stirring with no immediate justification. In some of our debates about policy and aesthetics, the thematics of process presents itself in an inverted form; cultural theorists desiring to identify more closely with trade union delegates than with poets or painters or pop stars are defending administrative agencies against a presumed "semiotic" excess. This time, we aesthetes are astonished (are they talking about transgression?), but not surprised when one or two start hailing, as the object of their desire, that ordinary soul "the Citizen".⁴³ After all, there is a text about this and the shimmering ideal of just getting on with the job; it is a vision from The Lucky Country, by no means

unique to that book, in which the white male Ordinary Australian is dreaming, in 1964, a better future for his (br)others:

The pragmatic, sceptical Australian can walk through the rhetoric of Asia like a blind man avoiding bullets. There they are, out there in Asia, advising on pest control, credit policies, irrigation, language teaching, some of the thousand and one little things that help civilizations survive the radiations of their own bombast ... Their ability not to generalize, simply to get on with the job can open the hearts of practical-minded Asians (229).

Policy theorists would not say this, or would not use such rhetoric to say this, today. (Nor, I imagine, would Donald Horne). But this rhetoric, and this theory of rhetoric, along with the erasures, desires and projections that Horne's text inscribes, is part of their history and of the history of the cultural studies that we practise in Australia today.

It is part of my history, not least because I find myself doing cultural studies in a society where the dominant political discourse still sees "rhetoric" as an exotic bombast avoided by the ordinary (everyday life + government), and I often do this using a theoretical discourse that wants to find in the everyday a rhetorical escape from the metalinguistic (philosophy + government). The former will not admit of any difference in discourse, and that, in a sense, is its

politics. The latter does find it hard, I think, to make a political difference.

Changing the Culture

I want to conclude with an informal description of the immediate context for my own view of cultural studies. If my work is influenced more by concepts of everyday life than by debates about popular culture, this is partly a result of the way that feminism leads me to think about practice; I am less interested in music or TV than I am in how these cut across and organise the various time/spaces in which the labour, as well as the pleasure, of everyday living is carried out by Australian women. This is why I do not think of "tourist sites and sounds" as insignificant, like Stephen Knight, but also why I do not think of them primarily, like Myths of Oz, as settings for reading the popular in terms of signifying practice (although I am an ardent reader). I think of them in the first place as cultural combat zones.

Take a tussle over a hypothetical tourist resort on a beach in the 1990s. It is a site where Aboriginal land claimants, Japanese or Malaysian developers, white racists, entrepreneurs of many ethnicities who will be pro-Japanese but may be anti-Aboriginal, environmentalists, surfers, and a broader community mixed in every respect and divided about development, will all have to fight, unequally, over a space where the "deep biblical opposition between land and sea" is administered by a government committed to sustainable

development while trying to stave off bankruptcy. I say "hypothetical" to keep things simple: in reality, there will be Aboriginal supporters of development, racists who are not white racists, deep ecologists confronting Green-vote power brokers ...

In this context, culture is one medium of a power struggle in which most participants, at some stage or another, will passionately invoke on their own behalf the interests of "Ordinary Australians". This struggle is represented in the everyday as profoundly economic. Most public discussions of "culture" in the past fifteen years, whether on chatshows, in newspapers, or in pubs, have not been directly to do with TV or poetry or surfing. They have been about the impact of the deregulation of much of the economy on our social structure and ethical systems; about the Uruguay Round of the GATT talks, on which Australia's economic welfare (and the underpinning of the culture industries, as well as consumption) depends, and about the pros and cons of APEC; about the emergent division of the world into three rival trading empires with no clear place for "us", but a logic leading to the possibility of war between major capitalist powers; about the fragility of the global banking system and the Japanese property market on which much of it depends; about the conflict between national-economic, global-environmental, and local "quality of life" imperatives. These are all potentially frightening "futures" which are happening to us now as media scenarios.

At the same time, culture is now an export industry

thought more in relation to debt management than to concepts of a "whole way of life". In the past, the administration of our English departments relegated almost all Australian literature to the unstudied field of the "popular".⁴⁴ Today, English departments teach many forms of international popular culture, while "Australian Literature" (including criticism and theory) is a funding category conceptually on a par with opera, rock music, restoring old trade union banners, and financing Aboriginal arts.

In the field of this insistently economic representation of "culture", it is clearly one of the concerns of cultural studies to open up this field to experiences, and critical expressions, of race, gender, sexuality, and class. However, policy-makers in Australia have been, like the teaching professions, comparatively well attuned to such expressions; the media, more erratically so. So it is not always clear that a criticism primarily referring to a North American bibliography in cultural studies has, however heated its claims to politicalness, much practical advice to offer. The thematics of popular evasion, for example, can lead us to ignore that remarkable development in recent years whereby business, the media and many of Ian Hunter's "administrative intellectuals" have themselves been construing the everyday life of Ordinary Australians as something like an evasive object.

During the 1980s, the word "culture" began to be used by the media in a rather peculiar sense. In 1990, a week after the worst company crashes in Australian history had ended a

decade of financial mismanagement and deregulated corporate crime, a grovelling TV current affairs show host asked Rupert Murdoch (back home to shut down a couple of newspapers) what "we" could do to save "our" economy. Murdoch replied: "Oh, you know -- change the culture". The host did know what he meant, although he nudged Murdoch to clarify that you can't have greenies wrecking the economy "to save some fish or wombats or something". What Murdoch "meant" was a media cliché: a commonplace that Australia's biggest economic problem is the lazy, hedonist, uncompetitive, beach-bound, lotus-eating ethos of the Ordinary people. So pervasively was this judgment repeated throughout the 1980s that, by the end of the decade, corporate leaders, bureaucrats, politicians and opinion-makers were starting to sound like Maoists:

Changing the culture is not a quick process in something as old and as large as ARC.

A cultural shift must be made while there is still time...

Professor [Helen] Hughes ... said Australians had relied on the "lucky country" attitude for too long ... "We have got to cultivate an export culture".

We are, nearly all of us, bludgers. That is the reason the country is in a mess and it will not get out of that mess until the national bludging culture

has been reversed.

These slogans are from, respectively, a chief executive of Smorgon ARC, Australia's largest producer of concrete reinforcing steel; a past president of the Business Council of Australia introducing a planned "debt conference"; a financial journalist reviewing a speech by an academic economist; an editor of the Australian Financial Review in his other role as columnist in the nation's biggest-selling Sunday tabloid.⁴⁵

In this context, "changing the culture" primarily means "getting people to do more work for less money". But it is assumed, in the logic of corporate and administrative desire, that this will also mean changing the minutiae of conduct at the workplace ("work practices") and thus the values and expectations of home and family life; liberalising working-class attitudes to gender, sexual preferences (now constituting "market segments") and race; increasing class consciousness (that is, making social and economic inequality more acceptable to Australians); and thus changing the meaning of some of the more enduring myths of white Australian history. During the 1980s, those discourses of desire known as government reports were promoted in the media as part of a doctrine of "changing the culture", culture being taken to be malleable, or "calculable", in Ian Hunter's sense. These are complex and ambiguous developments. An example of the "desire" factor is the Garnaut Report, Australia and the North-East Asian Ascendancy, which recommended as part of a single strategy the removal of all tariffs by the year 2000 and

compulsory teaching of an Asian Language in all Australian primary schools.⁴⁶ It did not consider how an overloaded and underfunded state education system might be able to achieve this.

The distinction between popular culture and everyday life becomes tenuous indeed in the mediated policy field. Some people still fear that cultural studies will "aestheticise" politics. I think that cultural studies has to confront the aestheticisation of "politics" in the contemporary governmental process. For example, an image on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald in 1988, captioned "The Band That Makes You Bop": four figures framed in cliché rock-promo style, half-vanishing in shadows as they tried to look tough and sexy. "Bop" was a pun on "BoP", Balance of Payments. The "stars" were accountants -- clerks who had prepared that month's statement on our balance of payments crisis -- and the text was a human interest story. The logic of aestheticisation was followed right through to modernist self-reference and postmodern obsolescence: by 1990, a cartoon has huge boulders hitting zombies on the head, BOP! -- as the Treasurer (Paul Keating) says to the Prime Minister (Bob Hawke), "they get anaesthetized after a while".

It is an article of faith in cultural studies that most people are not zombies. You could say that "changing the culture" is a myth already being appropriated and revised by the people at whom it is directed. A few nights after Rupert Murdoch did his bit for national salvation, an airport fire brigade chief talked on the same show (The 7.30 Report) about

disaster stress, and the therapy he'd needed after cleaning up a fatal accident. He said he was interested in "changing our work culture"; by "our", he meant men -- making it all right for men to admit to emotional distress and seek help to do something about it. This, I think, is "subversive": not perhaps in relation to a political economy that now needs its workers to be more "flexible" than in the past but in relation to the political myth of the Ordinary, past and present, in Australian everyday life -- and the attacks that some of its virtues are now, in the name of economy, sustaining.

By "changing the culture", this man meant something ethical in Ian Hunter's sense. It seems to me that administrative and political, aesthetic and ethical modes of practice may not be so easily or even usefully distinguished once "everyday life" has become, in the name of "culture", an object of bureaucratic fantasy, policy desire and media hype, as well as a subject of seemingly unlimited cultural production. However it is certainly not useful either to pose problems as though in studying "the everyday" one is always directly involved in a mortal combat with the history of Western philosophy.

In this context, I would like to think of cultural studies as a discipline capable of thinking the relations between local, regional, national and international frames of action and experience (assuming that these frames necessarily involve a politics of race, gender, sexuality and class). There could be two consequences of this. First, projects in cultural studies could be oriented a little less towards the

big debates galvanising the discipline world-wide and lot more towards the "ethical" and policy issues being debated in public media in the contexts that we take to concern us. For example, the Garnaut Report might provide a better starting point for discussing, say, "elitism" in Australia than the burden of the Literary in Britain or the United States. Second, I would like to see cultural studies more informed than it has been in the past by debates in political economy and in geopolitics.

I say this, however, as a "textual" critic rather than an amateur social scientist. The question of mediation, materially distinct from the policy process itself, is ignored by most policy polemics. Yet in my opinion, it is at least as appropriate for cultural studies to concern itself with this as it is to aspire to intervene directly in bureaucratic and business spheres. Recognising that the media instance of the policy process may have a certain autonomy, randomness, productivity and "citizen input" can make it more difficult to mobilise the oppositions between politics and aesthetics that have marked this debate so far.

For this reason, my own alternative to a family romance of Australian cultural studies would not be to "invent" a history for the field, but to argue the importance for its history of reading, for example, Eric Michaels' work on Warlpiri television; Tom O'Regan on the "space-binding" function of new communications policy; Sneja Gunew on critical multiculturalism, migrant women's writing and feminist critical theory; Stephen Muecke on Aboriginal story-telling

and postmodern travel writing; Yuki Tanaka on the Japanese political-construction (as opposed to military-industrial) complex, and Helen Grace on the folklore of finance capitalism and its modes of masculinity.⁴⁷ With perhaps little else in common, these projects are all engaged in some way with contesting images of policy: not simply images of what "policy" is or ought to be, but with its failures and absurdities; with how people live with its operations and unforeseen consequences, and then with multiple mediations and refractions of their own responses; with how they formulate initiatives of their own; with how all this living "exceeds" (to wheel in a useful term) the demands and the desires of the policy imaginary. So they are all concerned with culture and government in a very broad sense.

For this reason, too, my favourite "founding text" for my own version of cultural studies is Sylvia Lawson's great critical biography of a 19th century white male populist magazine editor, The Archibald Paradox: A Strange Case of Authorship.⁴⁸ A theorisation of media work as political practice, it is also one of the most subtle accounts we have of the dilemmas of a "colonial" intellectual (to use the term appropriate to Archibald's time), and of the paradoxical conditions of his political effectivity. More broadly, it is a major reading of the 1890s: the very period in Australian cultural history which saw, partly thanks to Archibald, the apotheosis of the Ordinary in all its sexist, racist, social democratic glory; the very period which saw, partly thanks to The Bulletin, the formalisation of an aesthetic doctrine

forbidding the "too far fetched"; and also the very period in our economic and political history which is figuring in our media now as the model, if not the source, for our problems in the present.

Lawson's is a major reading because it makes these legends problematic: she shows the radicalism and the idealism mixed up with the worst of the Ordinary; she shows the complexity produced as well as repressed by stereotypes in popular cultural thinking; obliquely, her work shows us why the posing of white male Ordinariness today as an object of cultural "restructuring" may involve, paradoxically, an attack on some social values that may well be, like the uncompetitive and unpatriotic beach, worth defending. In this way, the Archibald Paradox for me is an exemplary history of the present.

Fortunately, it would be too far-fetched for anyone romantically to claim Sylvia Lawson as their new, improved Father -- academic, journalist, fiction writer, film-maker and policy lobbyist that she is. One reason is that her achievement in The Archibald Paradox was already to show that there never was anything "singular", and certainly nothing perfect, about the period supposed to be at the "origin" of modern Australian culture; we do not look back at the mythic white male 1890s from the plurality and mixity of our society today; that mixity was there, from the beginning.⁴⁹

John Forbes reminds us that knowing this can be a modest survival guide for living with all that speech as it circulates endlessly in paranoiac space. His imagery, like

everyday speech, can sometimes sound violent, a bit brutal and inhuman -- all those stunned mullets and headless chooks, mute victims of a history that mistook itself for a war between Man and Nature. So, too, his discovery of the truth about the stunned mullet when it comes up for air after its burst of eloquence may seem "inhuman" or "impersonal"; in fact, it's rather tender and optimistic:

up close

*the scales are false
in fact a cunning mechanical contrivance,
like Bob Hawke's hair --
they glitter, exposed to the atmosphere
instead of dying, being alloy not flesh*

The Stunned Mullet.

NOTES to Chapter Three

1. John Forbes, New and Selected Poems (Sydney: Angus & Robertson), 65. Further references, in parentheses in the text, are to this edition, which includes a selection from The Stunned Mullet (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1988).

2. Donald Horne, The Lucky Country (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1964), 21. Further references in parentheses in the text.

3. I develop this argument further in "Panorama: The Live, The Dead and the Living", Island in the Stream: myths of place in Australian culture ed. Paul Foss (Sydney: Pluto 1988), 160-87.

4. Horne was invited to open the first national Australian Cultural Studies Conference at the University of Western Sydney in December 1990.

5. Donald Horne, Money Made Us (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 6.

6. Andrew Ross, No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 15-41. One difference between Australian and American "middlebrow" culture as Ross describes it may be that the former has not been subject to either a successful patrician or an effective Left wing backlash.

7. Jane Gallop, Reading Lacan (Ithaca and London: Cornell, 1985), 74-92.

8. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 311, my emphasis.

9. Discussion session on "Australian Cultural Studies: Past, Present and Future", University of Western Sydney, Nepean, December 1990.

10. J. Laplanche and J-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-analysis (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980), 160-61.

11. Marthe Robert, Roman des origines et origines du roman (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 44-50.

12. Rey Chow points to another difficulty when she notes that under the protocols of postmodernist listing and enlisting of minorities, "the local" may still only secure an audience by gesturing, via "'first world abstractions" such as modernism and postmodernism, "toward the forum at large": "As for local specificities -- even though such are buzzwords for

a politics of abandonment -- audiences usually nod in good will and turn a deaf ear, and readers skip the pages." Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 71.

13. Graeme Turner, "Dilemmas of a cultural critic: Australian cultural studies today", Australian Journal of Communication 16 (1989), 1-12. Further references in parentheses in the text. See also Turner, "Of rocks and hard places: the colonized, the national and Australian cultural studies." Cultural Studies 6.3 (1992), 424-32.

14. This pressure is itself an "internationalising" problem for scholars working in contexts peripheral to the geography of global publishing in English. See Kuan-Hsing Chen, "Voices From the Outside: Towards a New Internationalist Localism", Cultural Studies 6.3 (1992), 476-484.

15. On the implications of admitting mixed origins for national historiography, see Ann Curthoys, "Single White Male". Arena Magazine 8 (1993-4), 28, and the discussion of her arguments in ch. 6 below.

16. See Geoffrey Dutton, Sun, Sea, Surf and Sand -- The Myth of The Beach (Oxford and Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 84-5. On the "racial ideals" in Australian Beach Pattern, see Linda Slutzkin, "Spartans in Speedos" in Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988 ed. Daniel Thomas (Adelaide: International Cultural Corporation of Australia Ltd. and Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1988), 176-7.

17. Stephen Knight, The Selling of the Australian Mind: From First Fleet to Third Mercedes (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1990), 1-11. Further references in parentheses in the text.

18. See also Manning Clark's essay from 1963, "The ruins of the ideologies", in The Australian Dream ed. Ian Turner (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1968), 348-51.

19. John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner, Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture (Sydney, London, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 71-2.

20. Paul Carter, The Road to Botany Bay (London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987): see Eleanor Dark, The Timeless Land (Sydney: Collins 1941); Robert Hughes, The Fatal Shore (London: Collins Harvill, 1987); Bernard Smith, European Vision and The South Pacific 1768-1850 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960). For alternative accounts of the beach scene, see Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly, Creating A Nation (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble, 1994); Colin Johnson, Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1983); Henry Reynolds, The Other Side of the Frontier:

Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), and The Law of the Land (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987); Anne Summers, Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonization of Women in Australia (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), and Eric Willmot, Pemelwuy: The Rainbow Warrior (Sydney: Weldons, 1987).

21. Eric Willmot, Australia: The Last Experiment (Sydney: ABC Enterprises, 1987), 32-3.

22. M.M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). As chronotope, the beach in Australia can be very sinister; see my "Fear and the Family Sedan", The Politics of Everyday Fear ed. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 285-305.

23. Mudrooroo Nyoongah, "Beached Party", The Sydney Morning Herald 19 January 1991. As part of the Sydney Writers' Festival, this poem was commissioned as an occasional piece for Australia Day, with the manuscript being donated to the Mitchell Library archive. Mudrooroo Nyoongah has published novels and criticism under the names Mudrooroo, Mudrooroo Narogin, and Colin Johnson.

24. Les Murray, The Vernacular Republic: Poems 1961-1983 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1990), 23-4.

25. See Juan Davila and Paul Foss, The Mutilated Pieta (Sydney: Artspace 1985), and Juan Davila: Hysterical Tears, ed. Paul Taylor (Melbourne: Greenhouse 1985). Bivouac is printed in Island in the Stream ed. Paul Foss.

26. D. H. Lawrence, Kangaroo (Ringwood and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 82; Horne, The Lucky Country, 24.

27. Graeme Turner, "Return to Oz: Populism, the Academy, and the Future of Australian Studies", Meanjin, 50/1 (Autumn 1991), 20 (my emphasis).

28. Marshall Berman, All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

29. On the contradictions of this attitude in ethnographic Cultural Studies, see Virginia Nightingale, "What's 'ethnographic' about ethnographic audience research", in John Frow and Meaghan Morris, eds, Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 149-61.

30. See Mike Featherstone, "The Heroic Life and Everyday Life", Cultural Theory and Cultural Change ed. Mike Featherstone (London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: Sage, 1992), 159-82.

31. Margaret Morse, "An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television" in Logics of Television ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 193-221. Further references in parentheses in the text.
32. Henri Lefebvre, Everyday Life in the Modern World, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), 1-6.
33. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 97.
34. On the strategy/tactics distinction, see ch. 4 below and my "Banality in Cultural Studies", Logics of Television ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 14-43.
35. A major reworking for cultural theory of enunciation as both performative and referential is Homi K. Bhabha's The Location of Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
36. Maurice Blanchot, "Everyday Speech", Yale French Studies 73 (1987), 12-20.
37. Wlad Godzich, The Culture of Literacy (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 272, my emphasis.
38. Ian Hunter, Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education (London: MacMillan, 1988); "Setting Limits to Culture", New Formations 4 (Spring 1988), 103-24.
39. Hunter, "Setting Limits to Culture", 110.
40. See Tony Bennett, "Putting Policy into Cultural Studies", Cultural Studies ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, 23-37; Stuart Cunningham, "The Cultural Policy Debate Revisited", Meanjin 51.3 (1992), 533-43, and "Cultural Studies from the viewpoint of cultural policy", Nation, Culture, Text: Australian cultural and media studies ed. Graeme Turner (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 126-39; Meaghan Morris, "A Gadfly Bites Back", Meanjin 51.3 (1992), 545-51; Tom O'Regan, "(Mis)taking Policy: notes on the cultural policy debate", Cultural Studies 6.3 (1992), 409-23.
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MEAGHAN MORRIS

History in Australian Popular Culture 1972-1995

VOLUME 2

Chapter Four

GREAT MOMENTS IN SOCIAL CLIMBING

...the fact that many philosophies (including tendencies in Marxism) have imagined themselves to be metanarratives does not make the fantasy true. As Marx once quipped, 'One does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself'. There is not now nor has there ever been a metanarrative or a transcendental space. Theory exists everywhere in a practical state.

Warren Montag¹.

In previous chapters, I have drawn on the work of Michel de Certeau in order to stay away from one of his own favoured sites for the "erotics of knowledge" called "theory" ("this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more"):² the urban tower. Now I want to approach this crucial if not always central place in the economic landscape of cultural "restructuring", in order to consider some of the popular and academic genres commonly used to interpret (or, in de Certeau's terms, to practice) that place.

Let me begin with a few remarks in overview to clarify my argument's structure and purpose. This chapter has three parts. The first is a brief discussion of two models of "the tower" as metaphor, one of which is corporate-populist, the other academic, and neither of which is grounded in a

psychoanalytic discourse in any serious sense. Since I then go on to analyse two social spectacles involving actual towers, it would be possible to frame my material with a thematics of the gaze and, thence, surveillance. I am more concerned with summits, points, and climaxes.

Next, the tower spectacles are analysed as events. The second and third parts of the chapter concern two incidents that occurred in the Sydney CBD during the huge real estate boom of the late 1980s. One was a "King Kong" theme promotion of some very expensive office space in a renovated building, and I analyse a comic that was part of the campaign. The other was a critical "stunt" in which a young man climbed the tallest building in the city, Sydney Tower (a tourist-telecommunications tower which is around 1000 feet high) while his friends filmed him doing it. The video that resulted, A Spire, was later shown on national TV.

In spite of the popularity of references to King Kong in cultural production today, from cinema and homemade video to customised postcards and fiction, I think that only the second of these events would qualify as "popular" culture in any of the currently accepted senses of that term, including the one that I prefer to use, de Certeau's notion of the popular as a modus operandi -- a way of doing things characterised by an art of timing rather than by a topological relation to some other "zone" (whether "high", or "elite", or "mass") of cultural space. However I shall read both events, both moments of social climbing, as engaging two different concepts of simulation -- one deriving from Jean Baudrillard, the other

from Gilles Deleuze -- and thus as entailing different models of intellectual, though not necessarily "academic", practice. In terms of tower metaphors and historic acts of social climbing, my chapter could perhaps have been sub-titled "Faust, King Kong and the Human Fly". However, I argue that the King Kong campaign and A Spire were precisely not about a Faustian model of intellectual aspiration.

If all this sounds allegorical, I must admit straight away that it is. Allegory gives me a convenient way to use these two events to frame a critique of a narrowly metonymic argument common in cultural studies today, whereby a singular form in the built environment ("the" tower) is taken, by a process of inflation and conflation, to be emblematic not only of a general condition of culture (a tendency in Baudrillard's work which has now been extensively criticised), but also of a historic intellectual "place" of enunciation -- which "advanced" or "postmodern" theory would then require that we renounce. I want to suggest that a gestural renunciation of altitude, overview, and the fantasmal position of "totalising master-planning" is inadequate to the problems of committed intellectual practice in the places and times that I, at least, inhabit.

In relation to places and times, I should reiterate here what I mean by "space". Again, I draw on de Certeau to assume that space is not a prior condition of something else ("place"), but rather an outcome, the product of an activity, and so it necessarily has a temporal dimension. Reversing the customary assumption that "place" is a structured space,

"space", says de Certeau, "is a practised place" (117).

However, I am more concerned with problems of historicising particular spatial practices than with the place/space distinction itself. Examining public spaces produced in the tourist-consumption economy, I have been less interested in a morphological description of the sites of that economy ("the" motel, "the" mall, "the" beach, "the" tower) than in a historical analysis attuned both to socio-economic contexts of practice and to those individuating intensities (this motel, this mall, and, since I have also counted stories, genres and readings as spatial practices, these beach scenes) that Deleuze and Guattari, adapting an old philosophical concept, call "haecceities"³. At the same time, the broader framework of these analyses does involve a more or less deconstructive turning of the home/voyage opposition that has worked so hard, in the nation-building practices of white Australian history, to gender our understanding of the relations between movement (conceptualised as masculine, when related by colonial ideologies of development to linear models of time), and location (thereby rendered feminine, and related to static or cyclic temporalities).⁴

To clarify the limits of my concern here with gender and space, I should make it explicit that my argument is organised by a shift, but not an opposition, between, on the one hand, a penis/phallus relation (predicated by both the corporate and academic discourses that I discuss), and on the other, a face/faciality relation (that I predicate for critical purposes defined by that discussion). "Faciality" is the name

of Deleuze and Guattari's theory in A Thousand Plateaus of the figure of White Man or "the typical European" -- a figure of majority. In their work, a human face can but need not entail "faciality", just as in psychoanalysis the penis can, usually does, but need not represent the phallus. In a first instance, the face can form in any "white wall/black hole" system⁵. The face is a binarising mechanism situated at the intersection of a semiotics of signifiante (a paranoid, despotic regime of interpretation which is "never without a white wall upon which it inscribes its signs and redundancies"), and a semiotics of subjectification (a passionate, or "monomaniac", authoritarian regime of prophecy, that is "never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion and redundancies") (167)⁶.

An excellent example of the "social production of face" (181) is the kind of relentlessly redundant and self-signifying corporate architecture represented here by the golden turret on the shaft of Sydney Tower, along with those hyperbolic interpretive discourses, both journalistic and academic, devoted to describing the "face" of the postmodern Metropolis throughout the 1980s. It is all the more appropriate to refer the concept of faciality to a tourist-telecommunications monument like Sydney Tower in that the face has, "as a correlate of great importance", the formation of landscape (172). With their revolving restaurants and observation decks, tourist towers not only exist to create a landscape for consumption but also, in their role as must-see objects dominating the tourist city, help to "populate" with

faces the landscape they create.

My purpose in using the concept of "face" is not to claim that it gives us a better way of thinking about corporate architecture than the psychoanalytic concepts commonly used in contemporary theory. One could perhaps defend such a claim, given the difficulties of thinking sex with race and class in a psychoanalytic framework.⁷ However, in my view the polemical address to psychoanalysis in their Anti-Oedipus should not lead us to ignore the way that Deleuze and Guattari's work often involves an irritably para-sitic use of psychoanalytic theory, rather than a simple opposition to it.⁸

In any event, I have no intention of structuring a feminist essay around a rivalry between monumental masculine "faces" on the horizon of modern European thought. In introducing a shift between a penis/phallus relation and a face/faciality relation, I simply wish to analyse a critical act in popular culture, the making of A Spire, which seems to require some such shift before I can discuss its significance in the context in which it occurred. By saying this, I am reaffirming my own qualified commitment to the value of analysing individuated "texts" in popular culture.⁹ Problems in doing so arise, it seems to me, not at the level of epistemology or of disciplinary rivalry between aesthetic and sociological versions of culture ("text" versus "audience", for example), but as a function of the political issue of how and why we construct our contexts of reading, and the practices that ensue.

This leads me to a final introductory remark. I do not

find it useful to construct an unmediated mirror exchange between a given theoretical discourse on the one hand, and an object or practice of popular culture on the other ("Here's a bit of A Thousand Plateaus, there's a building ... THEY MATCH!"). Just as I want to insist on historical analysis of tourist spaces, so I prefer to begin "in the middle", as Deleuze and Guattari say, created by popular theories that developing, and because of, tourist places.¹⁰ This does not mean effacing my intellectual class position and identifying in fantasy with "the people". It does mean trying to define problems in relation to those locally circulating discourses in which the social significance of my objects of study, and thus the stakes involved in studying them, may be defined in a first instance. I emphasise "circulating"; the local is not a closed place of containment but a space produced in movement, and the middle "is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed" (A Thousand Plateaus, 25).

So I begin with a quotation from a Sydney-based property developer, John Bond, who said, one day in 1987, through clenched teeth on Sydney radio:

I.

The tower is not an ego thing.

*You don't spend a billion dollars on ego.*¹¹

Now, after following the long saga of Donald Trump's activities in New York I have a suspicion that, in his

pugnacious claim to be asserting a universal of capitalist common sense, John Bond was expressing a profoundly unAmerican assumption. In a culturally comparable milieu of corporate USA, it seems almost to go without saying (as least, it did in the late 1980s) that if you have a billion dollars to spend on ego, you do it in a very big way.

While this kind of casual comparison is dubious cultural analysis, it does raise questions of local resonance -- and this is my point. What is John Bond disavowing in Sydney, and why? What is at stake in his refusal to conflate a building form with a concept in pop psychology? One way of approaching these problems is to interrogate more closely the terms of Bond's assertion. My first question, however, is not "what is 'the tower', if it isn't an ego thing?" (he has already replied: an investment), but "what, in that case, is an ego thing? what is it that the tower is not?"

One thing that was certainly at stake for John Bond in 1987 was a chance to hit back at critics. In insisting that "ego" was not the prime mover in his plans to put a 97 storey "Skytower" into a patch of high Victoriana still left in the CBD, Bond was responding to one of the most persistent, reductive and satisfying insults of urban popular criticism: a big tall building asserts a big male ego; but if he needs to assert it ... it can't really be big.

On this occasion, an aspersion had been cast against the ego things of a whole gang of "cowboy" developers by Andrew Briger, a former Deputy Lord Mayor of Sydney. When Briger said that "there is something to do with personal ego among this

new breed that perhaps they think they can swing it",¹² he was questioning their claims of having the power to break the city's planning codes, rather than the formal thrust of their buildings. Another property boom was beginning; one which turned out to be the biggest yet in Sydney's wildly speculative history, and which would leave CBD office space, at the end of 1989, the fifth most expensive in the world after Tokyo, London City, London West End, and Hong Kong. Skytower was only one of the megatower projects arousing media attention, and not the largest at that: corporations were dreaming once again of spires equipped with launching pads and airship docking facilities; developers were bragging openly of their intimacies with a sympathetic (Labor) State government. One proposed to build 115 storeys above some 2 storey working-class houses in the Rocks, the oldest part of the city.¹³

Many developers were under attack. But for John Bond, son of Alan Bond -- since bankrupted, jailed and disgraced, but in 1987 a beer baron, a media mogul, and the owner of a company called BIG (Bond International Gold) -- dealing personally with castration threats was a routine PR affair. One Skytower cartoon expressed the desires of many Sydney citizens toward the Bond dynasty by having the father's huge Swan Lager tourist blimp (curse of suburban skies at the time) fly splat into the quivering side of the son's enormous urban protrusion.¹⁴

Popular mockery of the tower form as a (male) "ego" thing involves some ambiguities. It is vaguely anti-phallic: while it assumes that a tower is a "phallic symbol" (in this code, a

penis extension), the force of the insult is that someone's ego is also a penis extension: in the vernacular, "that bloke thinks with his dick". (This, presumably, is partly what Bond was denying on his own behalf, rather than that desire can be invested in making a lot of money.) But at the same time, a controlled and controlling "masculinity" is reaffirmed as the norm of public conduct. An ego thing is shameful because too prominent, too visible to others; one is caught, or exposed, at "doing" an ego thing; it's a form of unseemly display, and thus a sign of effeteness (why else should Bond deny it?) -- like carrying a poodle, or sporting a personalised number plate on an ostentatious car.

The ambiguities arise with the cultural possibility of those associations, rather than with the theoretically well-grounded feeling that an overt or "unveiled" penile display is something other, and something less, than phallic.¹⁵ On the one hand, such mockery works as a form of reductive magic: tall buildings shrivel to the status of minor social pretensions and personality defects; the awesome corporate power that they represent, and that they generate, is denied significance, in the kind of gesture that Andrew Ross calls "no respect".¹⁶ On the other hand, this popular one-liner also seems to act as a form of bad timing: it misses the point about the role of the "urbanisation of capital" in creating economic and social inequities, precisely at a time when its operations in our cities are reaching new heights of intensity and savagery, directly affecting our lives.¹⁷ Among the contributing factors to this particular boom was a huge growth

in tourism for the Bicentenary; the eviction of low-income tenants to make way for hotels and luxury accommodation to spectacularise the city for visitors was one of the immediate causes of homelessness in Sydney during this period.¹⁸

But is it just bad timing? In its Australian usage, the urban comedy of castration relies for its effect not just on phallus jokes (transnational signifiers of a problem of power) but on the codes of an old egalitarian vernacular -- one massively mocked by 1980s mega-tower developments, but fluently and effectively spoken by populist entrepreneurs like the Bonds. For to scorn a tower as the projection of a pretentious personality, you have to accept that showing ego is undesirable anyway: having it is one thing, flaunting it, another. You need to be able find it comic that a subject of wealth and power should presume himself superior to others, and then advertise his position. "Ego", in this context, is an act of exhibiting an unfortunate subjectivity ("making a spectacle of oneself").

This is, of course, a traditional populist way to miss the point about wealth and power. Egalitarian culture in Australia could always imply a policing of appearances ("levelling") without a politics of reform. If showing one's claim to distinction was a solecism ("sticking out like a sore thumb"), having one might be accepted, like a penis, as a perfectly natural fact. To this day, a hostile term for the act of attacking the rich, the privileged, or the powerful in Australia is "cutting down tall poppies". This metaphor was used in 1989 by Alan Bond himself in a speech at the

Australian National Gallery to open an exhibition of six paintings from his collection -- including his prize possession, Van Gogh's Iris. Comparing his own financial and legal troubles with Van Gogh's artistic struggles, Bond claimed affinity with the impressionists because both he and they had persisted despite the "criticism and mockery" their respective aspirations had received.¹⁹

*... not all towers are frozen objects of purity;
not all distance is aesthetic.*

Peter Cryle.²⁰

Purity and Mixity

Now, in professional discourses on high-rise towers and the city, there is or should be no question of denying the complexity and heterogeneity of the forces transforming urban skylines, nor of conflating a building form with a putative psycho-sexual cause. One would expect most critics to share with John Bond some version of Ada Louise Huxtable's basic premise that the tall building form is not only a celebration of modern technology but "a product of zoning and tax law, the real-estate and money markets, code and client requirements, energy and aesthetics, politics and speculation. Not least ... it is the biggest investment game in town".²¹

Yet some recent cultural theory, not necessarily concerned with the actualities of spatial restructuring in particular places, has also developed a habit of magically

shrinking towers. In spite of their manic proliferation in city and regional centres all over the world in the 1980s, some writers found ways to declare the new towers archaic; not simply "old-fashioned", but ontologically residual, mere left-overs from an earlier phase of development. Instead of being an "ego" projected in space, the tower form figures as an after-image of a previous moment of collective advance through time -- one now left behind in the long march of the commodity through culture.

In any work inspired by Robert Venturi, for example, "the new monumentality" is represented not as "tall and imposing" but as "long and low", following an opposition which privileges those regional landscapes in which, for whatever mix of demographic, economic, historic and cultural factors, mall-freeway systems prevail over tower/freeway systems (the symbiotic relations of which are ignored). Long and lowness then becomes a more "true" expression in space of the temporal development of an essential Being of Capital. This is explicit in Jean Baudrillard's America, where the "real" America is located not in "vertical" New York, but in the desert (the zero degree of long-and-lowness), and on the freeway. In another version, Paul Virilio provides a much more subtle myth of tower archaism with his notion that all "urban sites" are in themselves a mode of persistence or inertia in face of the shattering impact of advanced technologies. The new monumentality is not long and low but invisible; it can be read only in "the monumental wait for service in front of machinery". The position of overview here is no longer a

matter of altitude, but of an opto-electronic interface operating in real time.²²

Most interestingly, for my purposes, Robert Somol announces (without leaving monumental old Chicago) "that today a new mode of power operates and ... verticality is its first casualty".²³ In a witty reading of Helmut Jahn's State of Illinois Center as an urban ruin, Somol ironically proclaims verticality "dead" in the sense that the city is now literally made of phantoms, its postmodern towers regressive "time machines" or "stylistic second comings" concerned with replicating time, rather than conquering space, in a process of self-referential "cloning". This logic actually leads Somol's deliberately hyper-theoreticist discourse back around to restating that fundamental popular insult: "Jahn's simulacral tower" he says "has nothing to do with verticality and vigor" -- it is "a prosthesis, a dildo" (100, emphasis mine).

There now seems to be parallel between the arts of populist bad timing, and theoreticist wishful thinking. In both acts of comic reduction (tower to penis, tower to dildo), the critical discourse affirms its own performative powers ("saying makes it so"). Somol, furthermore, uses a version of Fredric Jameson's familiar thesis on the "collapse of critical distance" under postmodernism in order to claim that in the implosive space of our simulacral cities ("collapsing into their dead centers of rehabilitation"), it is always already impossible to distinguish critique from affirmation.²⁴ So discourse can only be effective as performance -- "a subtle

ambiguity, a style that will ... usually go unnoticed." (115).

A problem arises, however, in the form of a difference over "style" between simulacral and popular criticism. From the latter's perspective, it's not at all clear that a dildo would have "nothing to do" with verticality or vigor. Indeed, a dildo might well be considered the ideal form of both: while any object can of course be diverted to other uses, being vertical and vigorous is pretty much what dildos are for in a first instance, and prostheses are often treated as comic in popular culture because of their unequivocality compared to the ambiguities, and the frailties, of flesh. A dildo in this context represents purity of function and singularity of purpose, unlike the penis, which is mixed, and multiple. To mock a tower-phallus as "really" a penis is thus to emphasise the vulnerability of the penis. To mock a tower-phallus as "really" a dildo is to predicate, on the contrary, the greater power of the (absent) penis as the ideal phallic form. Somol's joke assumes that a dildo can only be a "phantom" substitute for "the real thing", the penis-phallus: it depends on the organicist "depth" nostalgia shared by Baudrillard's theory of simulation and Jameson's concept of critical distance, and in this it is quite distinct from a populist emphasis on controlling surface appearance.

Finally, I would note that towers are in some disfavour these days as representing the privileged place of annunciation not only of "Faustian" modernity in general, but also of totalising theory and "meta-narrative" in particular. In an influential gesture, repeatedly cited today, De Certeau

described coming down from the top of the World Trade Center as an act of leaving behind the solitary, gridding, voyeuristic, stasis-imposing, abstracting "theoretical" position of Master-planning, in order to walk forth into a bustling, tactile space of practice, eventfulness, creativity, and anecdote -- the street.²⁵

This is also a story, I think, about walking away from a certain facialising "vision" of structuralism. Yet de Certeau's move from summit to street involves a troubling re-inscription of a theory/practice opposition -- semantically projected as "high" vs. "low" ("elite" vs. "popular", "mastery" vs. "resistance"), "static" vs. "dynamic" ("structure" vs. "history", "meta-narrative" vs. "story"), "seeing" vs. "doing" ("control" vs. "creativity", and ultimately, "power" vs. "know-how") -- which actually blocks the possibility of walking away at all.²⁶ In fact, de Certeau's visit to the World Trade Center is a way of revisiting and mapping all over again the "grid" of binary oppositions within which so much of the debate about structuralism was conducted (by Sartre and Levi-Strauss, among others). "The tower" here serves as an allegory of the structural necessity for a politics of resistance based on a bi-polar model of power to maintain the imaginary position of mastery it must then endlessly disclaim.²⁷

My problem has more to do with town planning than with structuralism. Reading de Certeau's text, along with the others I've mentioned, I experience a revulsion of common sense, an urge to retort that we are not now living in a great

age of "master" planning (nor, for that matter, of general theory in cultural criticism), and that this should make a difference to the terms we're going to use, and the "spatial stories" we tell. Whatever else one might want to say about it, the entrepreneurial city of the 1980s was not la ville radieuse.²⁸ Indeed, De Certeau himself made the move "down" from the symbolic position of Planning precisely in order to note that "the Concept-city is decaying" (95).

So I want to turn now to some spatial stories from my own entrepreneurial city, and some discourses about towers which were also active during the real estate boom, but which did not involve either a populist reduction ("cutting things down to size") or an intellectual ritual of renouncing the heights ("getting down"). The first of these involves the classic figure in which myths of altitude, property and archaism may converge.

II

Contrary to popular belief, King Kong did not die during that embarrassing incident on New York's Empire State Building. Instead, with assistance from Fay Gray [sic]... he migrated to Sydney, Australia. However, they had not anticipated on one thing ...
"KONG, YOU'RE NOT SAFE HERE, SPIRALLING RENTALS OUT OF CONTROL, INFLATION, WHERE WILL YOU STAY?..."

"King Kong: The Moment of Final Decision"²⁹

In June 1989, the "PM Advertising" agency launched a King Kong theme promotion of office space for sale in a building in the Sydney CBD. PM declared that the concept was "perfect for the AWA Building since it shares a lot in common ... with New York's Empire State Building." The concept was also ambitious. Built in 1939, a mildly ornate office block with a vague reminiscence of the Eiffel Tower on top (a radio tower that better resembles the RKO Pictures logo), the Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd. Building -- once, it is true, Sydney's tallest -- is thirteen storeys high [fig. 1].

The Kong campaign was an elaborate affair. One columnist saw in its extravagance a sign that the crash was coming: for "In The Know" (Weekend Australian June 24-25), such "bizarre" efforts to publicise space worth \$7000 per square metre meant the panic of pending downturn, not the frenzy of a boom. A huge advertisement spilled across the investment pages of every major newspaper in the country. Its main feature was "King Kong: The Moment of Final Decision", a comic strip printed over two consecutive right-hand pages to heighten the narrative tension. On the first page, the comic was framed by two photographs and two simulated news reports -- one about the King Kong theme's success in attracting investor attention, the other about the "increasing demand" for owner-occupier space, as rentals in the CBD reached \$1000 per square metre. A close reading of the text couldn't miss its rigid binary structure. Its over-elaboration was also a little bit puzzling; the design was very messy, the ad poorly differentiated from unrelated copy occupying the rest of the

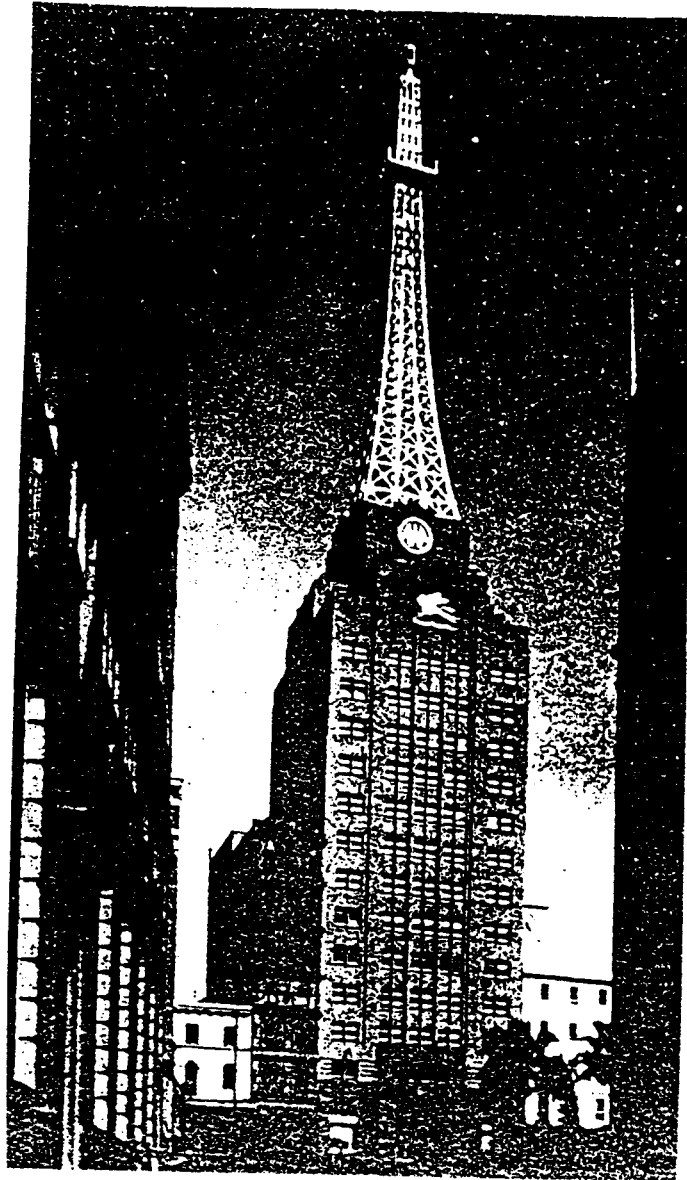


Fig. 1
Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Building, Sydney.

Source: Building, 24 December 1937

page [fig. 2]. But on scanning the comic across both pages, the clutter of pairs on the first page eventually made sense.

The comic begins with the famous couple in Sydney. Clinging to the top of the AWA tower, Kong and Fay consider their options. Fay has a conservative view of real estate, and a nostalgic image of Kong. She wants to run away from the city and take him Back to Nature ("a BIG ROCK not too far away"). Her dream home is Uluru (Ayers Rock) in the central desert. But Kong is a natural real estate animal ("this building looks even better than the other one with a tower"); with one glance at the quality finish and fabulous views of his prime CBD location, he knows he's sitting on a good investment. So Fay, ever faint-hearted, issues an ultimatum from the bottom right-hand corner of the page: "Well KONG. It's the AWA Building or me. What's it going to be?..." And when we turn over, King Kong's "natural" decision is:

KING KONG DROPS FAY GRAY

In fact, the plunging lines of the drawing imply that King Kong throws Fay Gray; a reading confirmed in one of the vertical blocks of fine-print filler ("Poor Fay, thrown over for a more attractive proposition worth really big bananas in the future") that, by flanking and supporting the central image of the tower, act visually to enhance its soaring, phallic singularity [fig.3].

With this clear designer solution to the bothersome clutter of couples, Kong as corporate beast takes the hard

KING KONG

THE MOMENT OF FINAL DECISION

Contrary to popular belief, King Kong did not die during that embarrassing incident on New York's Empire State Building.

Instead, with assistance from Fay Gray (they had both become much closer after the Empire State affair), he migrated to Sydney, Australia.

However, they had not anticipated on one thing...

retail space, especially in the CBD.

With prime CBD rentals breaking the \$1,000 per m² barrier, many companies are now questioning the future of rental only office accommodation.

Although this landmark building has a recommended preservation order under the

refurbished male and female amenities on each floor.

The availability of floor by floor purchasing will no doubt suit a wide range of investors and owner/occupiers whilst providing excellent office accommodation with rarely available park views to the North and spectacular city-scapes to the South East.

KONG YOU'RE NOT SAFE HERE. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A CASE OF CONTROL OR ESCAPE. WHERE WILL YOU STAY?

BUT FAY, THIS BUILDING LOOKS EVEN BETTER THAN THE OTHER ONE WITH A TOWER.

AND LOOK AT THE FABULOUS VIEWS.

AND CENTRAL LOCATION.

WELL KONG IT'S THE AWA BUILDING OR ME. WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?

I CAN BEAT THE INCREASING RENTALS BY PURCHASING MY OWN SYDNEY TITLED FLOOR, PERFECT FOR AN OWNER OCCUPIER.

WELL TAKE A LOOK AT THIS. THE QUALITY FINISHES AND THE SUPERB REFURBISHMENT.

KONG... COME AWAY WITH ME. I KNOW JUST THE PLACE. A BIG ROCK NOT TOO FAR AWAY...

CARLETON PLACE
NEWCASTLE
CARLETON PLACE
NEWCASTLE
CARLETON PLACE
NEWCASTLE

Fig. 2
 "King Kong, The Moment of Final Decision"
 PM Advertising.

Source: Australian Financial Review 15 June 1989

KING KONG DROPS FAY GRAY



"SORRY FAY, THE AWA BUILDING IS TOO SWEET A DEAL TO LET GO"

Once King Kong took a good look at the AWA building, he felt just a little uncomfortable with the thought of running away with Fay and starting a new life somewhere else.

To be perfectly honest, after seeing the extensive refurbishment program, great views (almost all the way back to Africa) and the fact that anyone can now purchase their own strata titled floors (ranging from 20sqm to 34sqm), he began to feel quite attracted to his new address.

He was so enthralled that if he so chose, he could purchase floors without the usual 10% deposit for total purchase price.

He thought long and hard, weighing up the pros and cons, and finally decided to stay.

King was especially happy also with the location, since he shared the area with some pretty classy neighbours including Maritime Plaza, Chiswick House, First Macquarie Hangarford Centre Development, FASH Development and Mirvac's NZI project in Clarence Street.

He began to question the logic of running away when he was already sitting on such a sweet deal as an owner/occupier or simply an investor. All he had to do was sit tight and wait for the market to rise and pocket handsome returns to come in.

And after looking at the future potential in investment prices, he went positively ape.

Fay, Fay, thrown over for a more attractive proposition worth really big bananas in the future.



Raine & Horne
Commercial

Richard Ellis
Commercial

Fig. 3
"King Kong The Moment of Final Decision"
PM Advertising.

Source: Australian Financial Review 15 June 1989

decisions and regains his killer instinct -- and when the Beast at last kills Beauty, Fay's domesticated values of "security" go with her. For Fay is not just a typical tourist seeking, with Baudrillard et al., authenticity in long and lowness in the desert. Her vision of making a home at Uluru in the "heart" of the continent is a prime suburban fantasy of a stable tradition of meaning. Famous as "solid rock/sacred ground" in a late 1970s pop song for Aboriginal land rights (but just as "Solid Rock" in a simultaneously appearing finance company billboard), "Ayer's Rock" is, of course, the centre of a classic (white) national imaginary.³⁰ In rejecting this "suburban" escapist tradition, Kong knows he'll be more at home in the tough environment of rampant speculation. If his final decision is an act of passion, rather than reason, then the entrepreneurially "wild" city really is Kong's natural habitat; and, as the fine print again makes clear, if push comes to shove, Kong can survive a crisis by trading on his reputation -- "all he had to do was sit tight and wait for the movie offers and product endorsements to come in".

The invitation to take this story allegorically is almost irresistible, beginning with the arrival of Kong and Fay as emblems of mobile investment capital flying around the Pacific Rim. In its brutal explicitness, this ad is a blaring manifesto for real estate speculation, and the striation of space it entails -- the dividing of city space by enclosure and bordering, the segmenting of populations, a monumental centralising of corporate wealth and power ("not to hegemonize the city in the fashion of the great modernist buildings", as

Mike Davis points out, "but rather to polarize it into radically antagonistic spaces").³¹ In more conventional terms, simply by identifying Fay with all the explicit social referents of her image -- anxious "housewives", struggling "home-owners", nostalgic suburban dreamers, even Aboriginal people, all the inhabitants of a place -- this image of Fay's expulsion from King Kong's urban paradise celebrates the consignment of large numbers of people to the status of "waste products" of spatial restructuring.³² "The Moment of Final Decision" is a comedy of displacement, eviction, homelessness, the feminisation of poverty, and of the end of egalitarianism as a slogan for everyday life.

It is also, though more obliquely, about gentrification and the role of that layer of intellectuals whom Scott Lash and John Urry call, following Pierre Bourdieu, "the new cultural petite-bourgeoisie" -- workers in all occupations involving presentation, representation, and the supply of "symbolic" goods and services.³³ For if one were to read "The Moment of Final Decision" allegorically with any honesty, the potential social positioning (and "home-making" practices) of many intellectuals -- including feminist theorists -- today would be, whatever our commitments and however much our hearts may be with Fay, in fact more like that of the gorilla. However, it is not a matter of noting and perhaps aestheticising a cynical celebration of our role as the avant-garde of the urban real estate business (recently a subject of criticism from Yvonne Rainer's film The Man Who Envied Women to Julie Burchill's novel Ambition). The critical question is

what kind of positioning "The Moment of Final Decision" ascribes to the cultural petite-bourgeoisie.

It's tempting to see it simply as a story of self-interested apes in their rehabbed ivory towers. A great tradition could support this interpretation. In his famous analysis of Goethe's Faust, Marshall Berman describes the "tragedy of development" partly as a progression from one place of elevation ("an intellectual's lonely room ... an abstracted and isolated realm of thought") to another, the "observation tower" from which Faust oversees a world of production and exchange, "ruled by giant corporate bodies and complex organizations".³⁴ Reductive and parodic as "The Moment of Final Decision" may be, it does draw on this tradition. King Kong flinging Fay from the tower is not only repeating the gesture of Faust's abandonment of Gretchen (destroying the woman who helped make him what he was, and so, destroying his past), but also, in the process, he is transforming his cultural status.

King Kong was classically a victim of Enlightening intellectuals (explorers, filmmakers, geologists); in his affinity with savages and women, Kong was the counter-Faustian figure of tradition, archaism, and myth. Flipping Fay back into that role (Woman as nature, nostalgia, "home") and then rejecting her appeal has the effect of installing Kong as doubly faithless to his origins. He becomes not only a snob ("happy ... [to share] the area with some pretty classy neighbours"), and an aesthete ("maybe jungle green walls and carpeting contrasted by a small waterfall near the lifts might

be quite relaxing"), but a class traitor -- in short, a yuppie.

There is a problem with this, however. While Kong contemplates the city from Faust's special place, the top of the tower, he is not himself in the position of the developer. This King Kong is a consumer: a "new" consumer, an active and discriminating reader of advertising images ("well, take a look at this..."), a speculator in signs. (This is why Kong, rather than Fay, provides a figure of my own activity inscribed in the image, a mise en abyme of my reading so far). The solitary Faustian position here has been disseminated into a bustling network of cultural producers, "ideas people" -- property developers, real estate agents, marketing experts, advertisers and promoters, city planners, architects, builders, interior designers. Above all, this text, rather than the urban situation it operates within (to make a crucial distinction), is not a tragedy but a crazy comedy of boom and bust which, in its material context of grim headlines about imminent property market collapse, said to and of King Kong the new consumer: climb now, crash later.

It may seem fanciful to assimilate a marketing campaign to any discourse on intellectuality. However, there is a minor figure in the Kong assemblage, one invisible in the image but a key player in the story. One of the "news" reports on the first page notes that a special "launch function" was held on a roof-top opposite the AWA Building with Bill Collins, the celebrity "nostalgia buff" film critic. "In the Know" revealed that Collins' task was to "resurrect the story" of King Kong,

while a 13 metre model was hung from the AWA radio tower. In taking his place in the network of animateurs at the PM launch, Collins the "Golden Years of Hollywood" revivalist was literally embodying the self-promotional strategy by which Lash and Urry define the "cultural petite-bourgeoisie". Always threatened with downward mobility, they (we) encourage "symbolic rehabilitation projects" that "give (often postmodern) cultural objects new status as part of rehabilitation strategies for their own careers" (295).

...the architecture of redevelopment constructs the built environment as a medium, one we literally inhabit, that monopolizes popular memory by controlling the representation of its own history. It is truly an evicting architecture.

Rosalyn Deutsche.³⁵

Evicting practice

Having taken an allegorical reading of a postmodern "cultural" object to the point where it must question its own social function, I now want to ask whether "rehabilitation" and "resurrection" really describe what we're dealing with in "The Moment of Final Decision", and whether these terms are sufficient to whatever it is about "postmodern objects" that we are dealing with when confronting commercial rhetorics so explicit about their social, as well as economic, function. It is too easily assumed that once "images rather than products

have become the central objects of consumption"³⁶ then a reality once ontologically distinct from the image has undergone some kind of death -- and that the language of necromancy is more apt to deal with the results than cultural history or political activism.

Robert Somol's necromantic reading of the State of Illinois Centre is a case in point: its terms lead to the conclusion that "we must ... abandon the language of struggle (and the concomitant notion of liberation) which only tightens the tourniquet of power (and futility) around us" (115). The only response left is "style", a mode of aestheticised knowingness. But as Rosalyn Deutsche points out, the architecture of redevelopment is precisely about struggle, and displacement. Other versions of popular memory, other representations of history, other "styles" of experiencing the built environment are violently expelled by the forces of redevelopment as part of the process of excluding and impoverishing people, of colonising and "abstracting" urban space.

It is crucial to choose carefully the terms we use to conceptualise the semiotic aspect of that process (and thus, resistance to it). Serious consequences follow for cultural politics: if one phantom city seems much like any another, if each instance of redevelopment is made interchangeable with every other, social criticism and political opposition alike are soon caught up, by this logic, in a circuit of redundancy, and reduced to routine gestures useful only for the theory market. One problem with the necromantic model of simulation

so popular in the 1980s is an incapacity to make distinctions that "ghosts", albeit parodically, the process of abstraction it describes. I want to argue this briefly by entering the permanently present citational network within which PM Advertising was operating. King Kong is a useful figure for considering the question of cultural reproduction, precisely because in cinema history he has "died" (and been reborn in his own image, the ideal simulacrum) in so many places and times.

For example, at the end of his 1977 essay "Touche pas à la femme blanche", Yann Lardeau agrees with PM Advertising that King Kong survived his fall from the Empire State Building.³⁷ Kong's "real" death probably occurred on the footpaths of Paris, during the publicity campaign to launch John Guillermin's 1976 remake of King Kong in France. A sixteen meter, six and a half tonne King Kong model was assembled by thirty technicians, animated by electronic wiring and hydraulic pumps, and laid out flat on the Champs-Élysées for passers-by to file past on a platform above.

For Lardeau, this scene of banalised tourist vision and technologically programmed dreaming (the scene of the simulacrum) is funereal. What lay on the footpath was something material and "verifiable" that contradicted the "life" represented by the primal cinematic King Kong made by Schoedsack and Cooper in 1933. In that film -- so powerful a myth that all later versions refer to it as their origin -- Kong was a force of mystery, terror, and above all, monstrous uncertainty. Neither man nor beast, Kong was the ambivalence

of the border between Past and Present, Nature and Culture (and therefore, a figure of incest). Kong is drastically changed, Lardeau argues, by the ecologically-conscious farce of Guillermin's Oil Crisis remake. Merely a big, vegetarian gorilla hopelessly in love, Kong in 1976 was no longer a border figure (or, like some of his descendants in Son of Kong, Super Kong, Baby Kong etc, a parody of one), but a "site" of confrontation between ecologists and an oil company, between a science of conservation (zoology) and a science of development (geology). This Kong dies by default, not necessity -- he should have been put in the zoo.

The Champs-Elysees robot is just an extension of the technical credits of Guillermin's film. So Lardeau wonders if King Kong is still the subject of King Kong: pretextual rather than prehistoric, emptied of all ambivalence, he may now be just an occasion for displaying the power of technological expertise. This fits with the cardinal difference between the original and the remake, the shift from the Empire State Building to the World Trade Center (where Kong dies in 1976). For Lardeau, the latter "corresponds to a new phase of capitalist development, in which a bipolar power is redoubled on itself, referring only to itself in a space beyond all content" (123); leaping between the twin towers, Kong is caught in the play of feedback, and so is already finished as a primal force long before he falls.

What could this argument make of 1987 Rehab Kong hanging from a renovated Sydney office block which was only ever a degraded copy of a New York skyscraper? Nothing much, I

suspect, or nothing specific (although PM Kong could easily be made to reflect a "third" phase of capitalism in which the post-War system of bi-polar power has now been replaced by a multi-centred system representable not by any one monument but by the flows of information that constitute the ad). In fact, the bi-polar structure of Lardeau's own frame of reference -- original/remake, image/reproduction, reality/technique -- can say surprisingly little about the comic positivity of Oil Crisis Kong, except to inscribe in him, as a non sequitur, the loss of an older cinema. Lardeau offers an illuminating and poignant reading of Schoedsack and Cooper's film, but his is a structure of comparison that in the end can operate only to generate signs of lack in the present, and to find the present lacking.³⁸

Given such a framework, it is correspondingly hard to imagine what to make of the diverse King Kongs circulating now in popular culture except to reduce them, improbably, to examples of the Same: a pop art Kong in a subway T-shirt wanders past the Empire State Building, while a bored "Fay", brushing her hair, holds a mirror as he holds her; a richly coloured "Ethnic Arts" card (Mola, Cuna Indians, San Blas Islands, Panama) has KINGON, arms curving round Fay like butterfly wings, surrounded by leaves and flowers; a postcard from a small mid-Western town stamps on a King Kong panorama of 1933 New York, GREETINGS FROM CHAMPAIGN-URBANA. What can nostalgia for the origin make of a scene from King Kong No Gyakushu (1967), in which the "real" King Kong does battle with his own simulacrum (a mining-company robot) [fig. 4]?



Fig. 4
King Kong No Gyakushu, Toho, 1967.
Source: National Film Archive, London

Japanese King Kong has a history of his own, which I'm not qualified to enter into. For my reading here, however, the image of King Kong confronting "Mechni-Kong" offers a useful alternative to the original/remake (and "real thing"/dildo) schemata I've discussed so far. I think that the status of the (second-degree) "original" King Kong in King Kong No Gyakushu can be defined quite differently from that of the (original) "original" King Kong for Yann Lardeau. The titans blitzing each other near the Eiffel Tower in 1967 do not represent Nature (organic Kong) and Culture (Mechni-Kong), nor the problem of the border between them, but rather a conflict between mixity (the hair-covered King Kong model as cyborg), and purity (the smoothly unequivocal robot, the dildo). The heroic stature of "mixity" within the terms of this opposition may explain why King Kong, with his ambivalent relationship to power, is most persistently a penis, and not a phallus, myth; hence the proliferation of an arcane literature about the size of King Kong's organ.³⁹

An inability to specify such images as potential events - - in other words, to read them productively -- inhibits the possibility of theorising cultural practice. An ability to read them repetitively as signs of an Absent Image precludes the thought of "practice" altogether. It is curious, then, that Baudrillard's concept of simulation (death of difference, reference, history and the real in commodification) remains most influential today through the writings of Marxists like Fredric Jameson and David Harvey, who use it to describe aspects of postmodern culture while discarding its political

quietism. Yet this concept precisely depends on a theory of intertextuality that cannot imagine change: it recognises only apocalyptic, thus singular, rupture, and that only in the form of its impossibility as present or future event. For this reason, it is a theory most ill-equipped to come to terms with that form of change that Jacques Attali describes in Noise as "the minor modification of a precedent" -- in other words, with the technique specific to contemporary semiotic economies of serial recurrence.⁴⁰

But if we turn instead to Judith Mayne's 1976 essay on "King Kong and the Ideology of Spectacle" -- in its own way an "Oil Crisis" text, discussing the appeal of King Kong to American audiences during the Depression -- it is possible to see a real difference, a historical change, in King Kong mythology effected by PM's "Moment of Final Decision".⁴¹ In her fine analysis of the workings of sexism and racism in Schoedsack and Cooper's film, Mayne argues that the figure of the Other in the text is defined as an object of spectacle. The white woman, the island natives, and King Kong himself are not only constructed as "other" in ways specific to the conventions of 1930s Hollywood cinema, they are also brought into narrative equivalence as creatures to be filmed ("King Kong is a film about ... the making of a film that never is finished") by Carl Denham, the director and "petit-bourgeois entrepreneur".

As a result, socio-economic class comes to function as "the unrepresentable as such" in this imperial economy of spectacle. In Mayne's account, the problem outside the wall or

beyond the border in King Kong is not to do with incest or impossible congress or with an "untouchable" white female sex: "race and sex are convenient means ... of forgetting -- or repressing -- what class is all about" (379). When the petit-bourgeois "cultural" entrepreneur rescues Ann Darrow (Fay Wray) from poverty in New York, a narrative displacement occurs from the scene of the American Depression to a spectacle of exotic sex. The closing scenes of King Kong rampaging through a glittering, prosperous New York (a city as "other" in its way to American Depression audiences, Mayne argues, as the woman, the natives, and Kong) conclude this process of displacement by showing what happens when the entrepreneur loses control of the spectacle: the "laws of representation" are broken down by "this brute reality -- so gigantesque that it is unreality itself -- that is Kong". But this is not the return of social class to the scene of representation. On the contrary, it "reflects the most fundamental process of displacement operative in King Kong". The urban crisis appears, like the Depression for most economists at the time, as something "not fashioned by human beings, but the raw force of nature itself" (384).

Apart from its interest, and its force as a reminder that a "new" cultural class did not pop up overnight, Mayne's reading gives me a basis for defining what doesn't happen in 1989 when KING KONG DROPS FAY GRAY. First, the "corporate beast" now has no need to "naturalise" his actions by opposing savage predation to (economic) reason: the joke is that we know they're the same. Second, "The Moment of Final Decision"

is, as the trade critics sensed, a prediction of imminent crisis, not an imaginary resolution of one: the "crash" is accepted, not denied, as intrinsic to the logic of finance capitalism. Third, "The Moment of Final Decision" is a representation of, as well as an exercise in, the process of displacement: by rejecting the "exotic" appeal of "spectacles" of sex and race (Fay Gray's Uluru dreaming), it classifies them as distractions from the real thrills of class conflict and economic passion. Fourth, King Kong now is Carl Denham: there is no crisis of representation for the cultural entrepreneur, only crisis in representation as he waits for the "movie offers and product endorsements" to secure his shaky future. This is, of course, his big mistake and the biggest joke of the story: the fact that only "image" is capital for Kong (and Kong's only capital) is why he will crash sooner or later, and why the "cultural petite bourgeoisie" is the subject of the narrative and the author of the text -- but not the addressee of the sales pitch.

PM Advertising's exercise in "simulation" brings the figure of King Kong into the rhetorical and ethical field constituted by a privileged trope of 1980s entrepreneurial or bull market culture that I would call "the brutal truth". This was an ideology of spectacle that rested on the claim that there is no "unrepresentable" -- no limit now beyond which one cannot go, no desire requiring repression, no conduct, no matter how predatory, that needs to be disavowed. The mock-shock effect of the slogan KING KONG DROPS FAY GRAY is thus in Australian terms not only the "brutal truth" that it tells

about class, but the way it makes a mockery of the codes still requiring our society to maintain a "classless" appearance. In globally circulating American media culture, Wall Street's Gordon Gekko was perhaps in his heyday the most famous practitioner of the art of brutal truth ("Greed is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit"). In the small world of cultural theory, the rococo writing of Baudrillard -- dependent as it was on that formula of perpetual inflation, "ever more x than x" (the principle of hyperreality)⁴² -- functioned not so much in complicity with such neo-Darwinian plain speaking as in counter-point, an elaborate accompanying rhetoric that could only confirm, by its critical helplessness, that bull market "truth" was by nature an incontestable law.

King Kong, however, was not the only cultural entrepreneur dreaming of towers in Sydney at the height of the property boom:

III

*THEY TOLD HIM FROM THE START THAT IT WAS A SUICIDE
CLIMB -- DANGEROUS ENOUGH DURING THE DAY, EVEN FOR
THE MOST EXPERIENCED CLIMBER ... BUT DEADLY,
IMPOSSIBLE AFTER SUNDOWN!*

The Human Fly: Castle in the Clouds!

After February 1, 1987, Sydney media were buzzing with

reports of a "mystery climber" who had made it to the top of Sydney Tower -- and promptly disappeared. TV called him "The Human Fly": newspapers had him dangling 300 meters above "certain death" ("clad in a flame-red climbing suit"), and published dramatic pictures of a tiny figure crawling up the thick cables supporting the Tower's turret. The pictures had come from a "stunned onlooker" who happened to be hanging about with a camera on the roof of a nearby building.

Weeks later, a magazine revealed that The Fly was 26 years old, had an engineering degree, worked as a traffic planning consultant and "reckons he's a pretty normal bloke", while "stunned onlooker" evolved into "Glen Kirk", who was "filming a sunrise at the time" that he saw The Fly on the Tower.⁴³ Then at the beginning of August, 1988 -- just as the property boom in Sydney was nearing its peak -- the ABC-TV national network screened A Spire, a half-hour documentary by Chris Hilton and Glenn Singleman.

The first film of a series (I Can't Stop Now) about people with obsessions, A Spire was the story of how and why Chris Hilton had scaled Sydney Tower after six years of planning and preparation; how a mountaineer's fantasy had intensified into an idea of making "a personal statement ... about the urban environment", and how meeting Glenn Singleman in 1986 had transformed the plan to climb the Tower into a project to make a film about doing it. This project had two components and two goals. One was to ensure that Chris could climb the Tower without risk of "certain death" for himself or anyone else (Singleman recalls in the film how he had to be

convinced it would be "absolutely safe"). The other was making A Spire itself.

So this is a double adventure story with two separate happy endings, structured by a time-lapse and a spatial shift between the two (the ascent and the broadcast, the city Tower and the national network). There is a further complication. My object of analysis is actually a text produced during the lapse of time between the two conclusions. A Spire exists in two versions, the first of which was a 43 minute film made without ABC assistance, but in the hope of persuading a network to buy it. For my second model of social climbing, I want to begin with this "original" version, which can circulate as an independent video.

But at this stage, "beginning" isn't easy. A Spire is of course impossible to reproduce as accompaniment for an essay. It would also be difficult metonymically to describe "the plot", or to analyse a crucial passage that might "give an idea" of the film, which I must assume most readers won't have seen. However this problem -- familiar to all non-canonical film study and all criticism of temporal arts -- does allow me to define something unusual about A Spire as an adventure story. In contrast to the "punch-line" structure of King Kong's Moment of Final Decision -- a narrative relentlessly directed, like any one-liner, towards its eventual "singular" outcome -- A Spire is a narrative of ascent which is neither linear, nor simply "climactic".

Instead, several stories combine in a composite history. Along with footage of the actual climb, there are stories

about different people involved, especially Mark Spain, who climbed part of the way up the Tower before deciding to go back down; about the process of researching the Tower's construction, then inventing and testing the climbing-tools that might be appropriate to it; about the months of physical and mental preparation in "natural" and urban environments -- the Sydney sea-cliffs, a car-park, the tree in an inner-city backyard. These stories drift easily into chat and interview footage: rock-climbers discuss the difference between falling on something "soft", like trees or water, or something "hard", like glass and steel; an Everest climber compares the scaling of Sydney Tower to Christo wrapping an island; various critical responses (from people in the street, a lawyer, an adventurer, a psychiatrist, an architect, a mythologist, an art historian) prolong the event of the climb by expanding its significance.

So while A Spire is narratively unified by footage from the climb, the extensions and digressions intertwine with it in such a way that the progress of the ascent is constantly interrupted by scenes from other stories, and by others' lines of thought. I say "interrupted", and not "disrupted": a lot of tension builds up in A Spire, since most of the footage is from the last, most difficult and least predictable, phase of the climb. What is rather unusual in an "action" adventure is that the tension is not relieved by attaining the obvious goal of the quest (Chris reaching the top of the Tower), but only with its "anti-climactic" result (once he gets there, nothing happens) and final outcome (he walks away in the street). In

fact, the moment of reaching the summit to some extent appears as one "interruption" among others in a fairly smooth process of travelling away from, and then back to, the city streets. I shall return later to the ending of A Spire, and to how it represents "overview" not as a position, but as part of a process.

First, I want to situate the film in the context of my discussion so far. There is a form of argument influential, perhaps even predominant, in cultural studies that would require me now to frame A Spire as an allegory of resistance. As a project ongoing throughout the 1987-9 property boom and its attendant social disruptions, the making of A Spire (including the "profilmic" event of the climb) inscribes a refusal of entrepreneurial aspirations to dominate and divide up city space. Acting in that space, between John Bond's grandiose Skytower dreams and PM Advertising's cynical reason, it should not only bear witness to popular opposition, but provide us with terms of riposte.

Now I think A Spire does do this: it will be clear that I do regard it as an act of social criticism and, more strongly, as entailing a political practice of opposition and transformation. While there should always be debate about the kind and the scope of political "effectivity" to be claimed for symbolic actions, I do accord them a productive, not a decorative or aestheticising, role. That is, I don't want to flout the generic expectations that the structure of my essay has created. But I also want to learn something from A Spire, to respond to, and extend, its productivity. Such learning is

in my view one of the purposes of textual analysis, which is not hostile to generalising models (on which it depends for its conceptual materials), nor to the abstraction of theorisation, but which assumes that the objects we read can provide, through their own material "resistance" to our acts of abstraction⁴⁴, terms for questioning and revising the models we bring to bear. So instead of reading A Spire as a confirmation of the models of action -- resistance, opposition, critique -- already available to cultural studies, I want to read it as inventing a practice for a particular time and place.

Strategy and Tactics

One model of action that immediately seems pertinent to A Spire as a critique of entrepreneurial space is de Certeau's powerful distinction in The Practice of Everyday Life between strategy and tactics (xi-x, 34-9). "Strategy" is the name of a mode of action specific to regimes of place: it is "the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'". It also requires, and produces, an Other: strategy "assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it ... Political, economic and scientific rationality has been constructed on this model". PM Advertising's image of the spatial and social relations

involved in "dropping Fay Gray" is in fact an excellent projection of de Certeau's concept of strategy.

A "tactic", in contrast, is a mode of action determined by not having a place of one's own. It is "a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localisation), nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality". However this does not imply a dystopian state, or condition, of placelessness; for de Certeau, "the place of a tactic belongs to the other." In other words, as a way of operating available to people displaced and excluded as "Other" by the bordering-actions of strategy, a tactic maintains an active relationship to place by means of what he calls an art of "insinuation". Tactics are opportunist: they involve seizing the chance to take what de Certeau calls a "turn" (un tour) through the other's terrain, and so depend for their success on a "clever utilization of time" (39) .

The notion of tactics is not as romantic as it can sound. For one thing, it is parasitic on the notion of strategy: if this means that "tactics" cannot of itself sustain a politics of self-determination for strategically othered people, it also means that it cannot be used to ground an ontology of Otherness, and that individuals cannot be treated, in de Certeau's terms, holistically as full subjects of either strategy or tactics. Furthermore, the distinction itself is not a way of deeming it a privilege to be marginalised, but a way of asking what kinds of action are possible once people historically have been marginalised by a specific regime of

place. This is why the distinction could underpin, for de Certeau, a theory of popular cultural practice. The popular could be conceptualised as a "way of operating" and an "art of timing" precisely because of its tactical relationship to the so-called consumer society and its strategic installations (motels, supermarkets, television, freeways, high-rise towers...).⁴⁵

If we turn to A Spire with this distinction in mind, it can help us to read quite closely how the whole project worked. For example, both the climb and the film were products of an art of very careful "timing". Chris Hilton began what turned out to be a nine hour climb around midnight on a Saturday, so as to be a long way up the cables around the shaft supporting the turret by sunrise Sunday morning. This meant that the little red Fly could be most advantageously filmed approaching the top of the golden turret with a bright blue sky for backdrop. However, the timing's immediate aim was to avoid alerting the police for as long as possible; hence also the choice of the quietest morning in the week for the "visible" part of the climb.

Scaling a corporate monument without permission is, of course, highly illegal ("trespassing, disturbing the peace, public nuisance", smiles Lesley Power, lawyer), and Sydney Tower is fully strategic in de Certeau's sense. Historically if not aesthetically one of the inaugural buildings of the "architecture of redevelopment" in Sydney -- a tourist tower opened on top of a shopping complex in 1981 to attract people "back to the City to shop"⁴⁶ -- Sydney Tower is a place

entirely "proper" to the life-assurance company that owns it (the Australian Mutual Provident Society), to the administration that inhabits it, and to the security organizations that maintain it and police its relation to the "exterior" created by the residents and tourists of Sydney.

So Chris Hilton's "turn" on the Tower involved a risk not only of being arrested at the end, but also of forcible "rescue" half-way up. This has consequences for the narrative tactics of the film. Since so much of the narration insists on the advance elimination of any real danger that Chris might fall or need to be rescued, thus endangering others, the site of tension is displaced from those images of a tiny figure dangling in vast space which could, and in action adventures usually would, invite us to anticipate death for the hero and still expect a happy ending. While such images in A Spire are awesome indeed, there is just as much anxiety about what happens after the climb. The tension is stretched across the accumulation in time of delays, hitches, and moments of frustration as the sun rises higher in the sky. The climb takes three hours longer than planned: time to negotiate Mark Spain's descent, time to force a too-tight hanger inch by inch along rusted beams, time to edge around the base of the turret to find an unblocked window-cleaning track -- enough time for there to be a guard in the turret looking out as The Fly crawls past the window. This is one reason why the sense of climax overflows the moment of reaching the summit. There is still the problem of escape, of getting away from the other's terrain.

There is another sense in which A Spire can be seen as a tactical response to constraints imposed by "strategy". In a speech to the camera near the beginning, Chris Hilton names the genre problem that the film will have to negotiate: "if this was a tale about climbing a mountain in some wild mountain range of the world, it would be a boys' own adventure story, a tale of survival against all the odds...". These days a rather dismissive generic term for any bland all-male adventure, the phrase "boys' own" points to the formal constraints that not only define the "place" of the genre in Western action cinema -- a relative or absolute exclusion of women, the isolation of (white) males as "proper" subjects of action, and the exteriorisation of Nature (and Natives) as "other" to Man⁴⁷ -- but that may also now frame in advance our expectations of any film in which, as in A Spire, a young man does have an adventure and survive against the odds.

As a way of pre-empting this response, Chris Hilton claims that shifting the scene from mountain to tower can modify the genre ("but this building is in the middle of the city", he continues, "so it brings to bear a whole lot of other aspects..."). Other speakers insist that "natural" and built environments are continuous, not opposed or external to each other, and scenes of men and women rock-climbing make the same point visually when one image includes the spires of the city rising just across the water from the cliffs. More strongly, I think, the boys' own adventure is modified by a series of questions in the film about the distinctions that do exist socially between nature and the city, questions that

follow from deciding to treat them as the same: "the legal aspects, issues of social responsibility, issues of the built environment and what it's for ... who owns the outside of a building? is it the public, whose visual space it dominates? or is it the owner of the building?"

In this way, something that may be called a critical difference is introduced to the boys' own adventure. This difference is "critical" in the simple sense that it involves insinuating a space of social analysis into the place of heroic action, but also in the more complicated sense that questioning the proprieties of the climb itself (those "legal aspects") immediately leads the film to question what counts socially as "proper" representation: "Is it responsible to climb a building and put your life at risk in front of others? will it encourage young children to climb buildings and put their lives in danger? is that a bad thing? people that come to try and rescue you, will it endanger their lives? will it deface the building? all these sorts of things ..." What helps to make this a tactical use of the boys' own adventure, rather than a "critique" from the genre's outside, is Chris Hilton's reluctance throughout to claim the place of the outlaw, propriety's easy opposite: "all these sorts of things are issues, because I'm not a criminal and I don't want to break laws and be locked up in jail". Climbing the Tower is never presented as violation or transgression, but as a use of the "place" of the other for purposes alien to it.

Related to this, finally, is the aesthetic practice of the film. If A Spire is not a wham-bam action adventure,

neither is it an avant-gardist experiment declaring its own deconstructiveness. It presents itself modestly as a fun documentary with talking heads, and amazing scenes. Yet this is why the adventure simply can't be "boy's own". The editing-in of side-stories and interviews casually guarantees a collective production of the whole A Spire adventure. A network of "ideas people" figures in the film, some discussing issues of ethics, law, and aesthetics after the event, while others work in advance on the problems of danger and safety; there are a couple of scenes of slide shows, in which a group uses photographs of the Tower to talk through tactics for climbing it. On the level of the film-making adventure, this use of what is now a fairly conservative documentary method with strong links to the great tradition of Australian social realism probably helped to "insinuate" an independent film that cheerfully confesses, theorises and depicts a symbolic crime against property into the state-owned broadcasting network.

At this point, it is useful to ask, "so what?". The strategy/tactics distinction can show how a critical practice may by-pass various obstacles to succeed "against the odds"; it is pragmatic in the best sense of the term. It also gives me a way of arguing that A Spire counts as popular culture while "The Moment of Final Decision" does not; a claim which itself risks populist essentialism, but which has the advantage of taking its model of action not from the ethos and practices of postmodern corporate culture but from a critical riposte to them. It also has the strength of showing how

resistance may follow a different logic to that which it resists. This is why I have not reduced A Spire to the status of neat binary opponent to PM Advertising's vision of the city, although that can be done in a number of ways -- grabbing a place vs reclaiming space, ownership vs tenancy, eviction vs infiltration, investment vs enjoyment, exchange value vs use value, cynical vanguardism vs utopian collective practice and, most profoundly, brutality and cruelty vs care and respect for life.

Yet without some way of bringing all this back home to concrete social situations, some way of showing how and why a "different" logic can matter and what its local inflections might be, criticism is confined to, at best, rehearsing a list of oppositional values, or at worst, producing pious but empty reassurances that there's something happening somewhere.⁴⁸ I'm not sure that the strategy/tactics distinction can always tell us very much about what is at stake, or what has been achieved, in a given set of circumstances. So I want to move on from it now to ask what follows from reading A Spire as a tactical operation of temporarily occupying, rather than territorially claiming, that much contested position at the top of a high-rise tower. What kind of "aspiration" did A Spire involve? what kind of practice does it entail? -- the very title of the film can carry overtones of a small business slogan, the enterprise ethos of the "pioneer" school of Outward Bound adventure, or the improving profiles of personal success produced by the Sunday tabloids. So what kind of "popular" critique did A Spire produce of the terrain on which

it took place?

I wanted to make a personal statement by climbing it, about the urban environment. I thought it would be a nice image to climb, that people would get a kick out of seeing someone scale down the tallest building in Sydney to a human scale -- just one individual, under their own power, bringing down a massive building which sets itself up as being huge, and impenetrable, and intimidating.

Chris Hilton

Rivalry and simulation

The Human Fly is an unusual superhero. Unlike Spider-man, Batman et al, he is not a paranoid crime fighter but a "passional monomaniac" (in Deleuze and Guattari's terms) with a social conscience. He just likes to climb and do stunts; but he keeps on getting involved in other people's problems, and he gives the money he makes to charity. This eccentric relation to the Law was always part of his identity as a Marvel Comics creation. In Castle in the Clouds! (3, 1977), readers' letters on the "Fly Papers" page make sure that we don't miss the point: "The Fly is not a neurosis-ridden 'everyman' stumbling into a radioactive accident, thus gaining super-powers. His 'sense of responsibility' doesn't tell him to go out and fight crime as a way of serving humanity ... The first issue in which I see the Fly patrolling New York looking

for bad guys is the last issue I buy" (Rich Fifield, Monterey, CA).

Reassuring Rich and other readers, editor Archie Goodwin underlines another of the Fly's distinctive features: "we have no plans of turning the Human Fly into a crime-fighter -- simply because in real life, he isn't one!" While carrying the standard disclaimers of similarity intended to any person "living or dead", the Human Fly comics also insist that their hero has as his counterpart a "real-life death-defier" (in fact, "we ...will see what we can do to have the real Human Fly appear in this mag with his two-dimensional other self"). Always already double, originally both "model" and "copy", the Human Fly further evolves as simulacrum (a copy of a copy of a copy) in peculiarly unstable ways.

It's not a matter of endless remakes. According to Michael Dean, the Fly does seem to have started out in the 1970s as a real person who had prosthetic surgery after an accident, and then kept on doing stunts, before becoming the Marvel hero who became a media "model" for other real climbers who may, or may not, have known the "original" Fly.⁴⁹ A media image of one of these crawling up the Sears Building figures briefly in A Spire as a model for Chris Hilton ("I looked in the newspaper and I read an article about a guy who climbed a building in America"). By the time the media in 1987 could shout about SYDNEY'S HUMAN FLY, the question of the original and the copy is academic in the popular sense. All it takes to read that headline is an everyday knowledge that "Human Fly" historically is the name of an action genre in which real

people and media images are productively mixed up.

An interesting corollary of the doubled character of the Human Fly is that he is also corporeally "mixed". In name and in physical capacity a man-insect, a hybrid of nature, the Fly is in body a cyborg, a product of science ("Someday I'll have to thank the docs for boosting my skeletal structure with steel ..."). He cannot be a figure of the dividing-line between "Man" and "Other", like the original, oneiric King Kong. On the contrary, his mixity is often treated as a sign of his human frailty. As soon as the Fly mentally thanks the docs for giving him fingers to dig into cliffs ("and ...I'm the one who was supposed to be crippled for life!"), he is attacked by a giant condor, a "ROBOT-DRONE" [fig. 5]. In a clash that recalls the battle scene from King Kong No Gyakushu, the Fly's hybrid vulnerability is challenged by the impervious purity of a mechanical bird of prey: "the frail manchild clinging to the ledge ... is all too human -- out of his element -- and his metallic attacker is incapable of feeling any pain!"

Images of extra-ordinary humanoid figures doing battle with metal monsters abounded, of course, in Cold War mass culture, and if it is possible now to redeem them as projecting a "real man's" difference from a relentlessly phallic consistency, it can be argued that they now have a dated air -- a vulnerability to the practices of nostalgia that perhaps makes it possible to reread them in sympathetic ways. From this point of view, the industrial robot has been replaced by the cybernetic replicant; the principle of



Fig. 5
Cover image, The Human Fly: Castle in the Clouds!
Marvel Comics, 1977

Source: Michael Dean

difference is no longer denied to Man's Other, but made internally constitutive of otherness in such a way, and to such a degree, that Man becomes other to himself, and can no longer be sure what he is. Blade Runner is commonly taken to be a vanguard manifesto of this shift, which for some metonymically represents a whole new era in history.⁵⁰

However my interest here is again in the modes of living-on effected by older legends (a question of change to be addressed by any "historical" approach to culture), and so I want to consider in more detail the Human Fly's original status as hybrid model/copy. A moment ago, I called the simulacrum "a copy of a copy of a copy ...", the dots signifying infinite potential for (differential) repetition. They could also signify my elision of the crucial element of closure in the usual definition of the simulacrum as, in Brian Massumi's words, "a copy of a copy whose relation to the model has become so attenuated that ... it stands on its own as a copy without a model".⁵¹ The most influential form of this proposition is Baudrillard's neo-realist rewriting of the "image" as that which now "bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum."⁵² The closure here is not simply syntactic, but logical (the differential therefore ceases to operate) and purportedly historical (the era of difference is over, sameness and stasis rule).

Massumi has argued that Gilles Deleuze's essay "Plato and the Simulacrum" offers the beginnings of another way of thinking about mass media simulation, because it takes the inadequacy of the model/copy distinction as a point of

departure, not a conclusion. In Massumi's terms, "beyond a certain point, the distinction is no longer one of degree. The simulacrum is less a copy twice removed than a phenomenon of a different nature altogether; it undermines the very distinction between copy and model" (91).

The key phrase here is "beyond a certain point". In his reading of the Platonic theory of Ideas, Deleuze suggests that the "infinitely slackened resemblance" implied by the process of copying logically leads to the idea of a "copy" so removed from the original (the Idea) that it is no longer a poor or weak "true" copy, but a false copy -- a simulacrum, which may externally feign resemblance but is constructed by dissimilarity.⁵³ The important distinction for Plato, therefore, is not between the model and the copy, but between the copy and the simulacrum. The "false" copy is dangerous because, in its constitutive difference from any model (including the Idea of Difference), it throws into question the validity of the model/copy distinction -- and thus the theory of Ideas. The simulacrum is thus the internal enemy, or the "irony", of Platonism; its philosophical figure is the Sophist. Simulation is not, as it is for Baudrillard, a closure of history (a crisis of hyper-copying) but, on the contrary, an action (like a productive practice of reading; Deleuze's reading of Plato is "simulated" in this sense). This is why, for Deleuze, the Platonic project depends on a "dialectic of rivalry" (46). True copies compete with false ones; the task of the philosopher is to unmask "false" copies -- in order to deny the difference of the simulacrum.

Building on this, Massumi suggests that it is "masked difference", and not "manifest resemblance" (however hyperreal), that makes the simulacrum uncanny and gives it productive capacity to "break out of the copy mold". Hence, for Massumi as for others, the allegorical power of Blade Runner. The replicant in the end is no longer a "more perfect than perfect" copy-human but a different form of life, capable of entering into new combinations with, if not necessarily subsuming, human beings.

Now, in these terms the King Kong and Human Fly combat scenes I've discussed may belong not only to the "robot" imaginary, but to the Platonic scene of rivalry. In King Kong No Gyakushu, a true copy of King Kong fights "Mechni-Kong", the false; even if their confrontation does pit mixity against purity, the penis against the dildo, the basic question once again is simply "who is to be master?". Although the Robot Condor/Human Fly encounter is complicated by a lack of external resemblance (and by a certain "masked difference" that gives the "frail manchild" his edge) the issue of mastery is still at stake. On the other hand, it's hard to say what counts as the Fly's masked difference: is it the steel-bone skeleton, which makes him doubly a false copy, a cyborg disguised as a man who imitates an insect, or is it the organic intelligence that fools his mechanical cousin, a robot disguised as a bird?

I think the significant answer is that it doesn't matter very much. Interrogating the identity of any one media icon may always lead to the scene of rivalry and legitimacy, a

choice between true and false, or "truer" and "falser"; at the end of the argument I've just rehearsed, we are merely deciding whether Blade Runner's replicant is more true an "illustration" of Deleuze's model of simulation than the Human Fly of Castle in the Clouds! This is not to say, of course, that all opposition, duality or "combat" can be reduced to Platonic rivalry. The aim of Massumi's contrast between two versions of simulation is, like my own, to differentiate them not in terms of their relative legitimacy as "descriptions" of the present, but in terms of their competing political logics, and the outcomes (ie, the futures) to which they give rise.

In this context, the significant point about the history of the Human Fly is that since his original hybridity conforms to the logic of the double and thus to the scene of the robot (the "two-dimensional" figure and his "real life" counterpart), it therefore unleashes what Deleuze calls "the positive power which negates both original and copy, both model and reproduction". In other words, "of the at least two divergent series interiorized in the simulacrum, neither can be assigned as original or copy" (Deleuze 53). It follows from this that the Human Fly, interiorising from the beginning a human climber series and a media image series that pretend to copy each other, only simulates conformity to the logic of the double. This is why trying to assign logical priority or a greater degree of reality to either the series of human Human Flies or the series of media Human Flies at any stage of their subsequent relationship is -- like closing the series by fiat or pursuing the long-lost original -- an infinitely futile

task.

One more point needs to be made about the Deleuzian simulacrum. It is really the name of a process, not a product nor a "state" of affairs, which tends in principle toward infinity. So it implies a kind of limitlessness -- "great dimensions, depths, and distances which the observer cannot dominate" (49). Deleuze calls this distance, "vertigo". But this is not the vertigo of Faust, overwhelmed, at the top of a tower, by the endless expanse of territory offered up to boundless ambition. It is the vertigo of Plato, discovering "in the flash of an instant as he leans over its abyss" that the simulacrum, the "other" that his philosophy strategically creates, can destroy his philosophy's foundations. It is the vertigo of a critical distance, in which "the privileged point of view has no more existence than does the object held in common by all points of view. There is no possible hierarchy ..."(53). Because the figure of the observer -- Plato leaning over the abyss -- is part of the simulacrum, the hierarchy abolished in vertigo is not only that which regulates the divisions between the Origin and the first, second, third order copies, determining authenticity. It is also the secular projection of that process in hierarchical myths of space (the top of the tower) and time ("meta"-narrative).

Back in the homelier world of super-heroes, it is worth noting that while the Human Fly is no stranger to the ordinary vertigo of cliff tops and ocean depths, he has an unusual allegiance to what we might call collective practice. Many heroes have side-kicks and a strong community spirit, but the

Fly's "frail manchild" vulnerability demands a lot of interdependence. He isn't invincible, he gets afraid, he needs help. There is a certain elitism of the body involved in his mythology, but no authoritarian structure of command. During stunts, he is surrounded and protected by friends (in planes, on the ground, back at the base) with whom he consults by two-way radio. The Fly is a media creature: he uses radio to orchestrate his stunts, then he constructs his stunts as messages ("giving hope -- through example -- to thousands of crippled and disabled kids!"). He is a radical, not a rugged, individualist; he expounds the strength of the weak. Far from being a crime-fighter, he is a political performance artist.

A Spire in both its components, climbing and filmmaking, works with this mythology. It isn't a matter of conscious or unconscious "influence", of quotation, allusion or copying, but of resonance between the divergent series constructing the simulacrum, and of the external effects of resemblance that simulation can produce. For that reason, I don't think it is important to dwell on the many points of "resemblance": the Fly's relationship to the friends and the film crew who made the adventure possible; the importance of the two-way radio, used sensitively in the film to narrate without rancour or rivalry the most awkward moment of the climb, when Mark Spain decides to go down; the didactic packaging of a stunt as a socially responsible action; the formal use of the genre of "personal statement" to further a politics for ordinary people ("I'm so **small** compared to this **monster**, this **monolith** to our civilisation", says Chris Hilton of Sydney Tower). These

points can be made, not because anyone set out to imitate a forgotten Marvel comic, and not because someone casually chose a "flame-red climbing suit", but because the myth of Human Fly (as the Sydney media understood) involves a collective production of knowledge.

For me, the important question is what can follow from this. As a visual element in A Spire, the Human Fly effect -- emphasised by the use of a telescopic lens and the editing of long shots and close-ups -- has far from casual consequences. Sydney Tower first appears in the film as the usual postcard "phallus" rearing above the city. Then, as the climb proceeds, slowly but surely the Tower becomes a face. After figuring as a distant urban peak, the turret turns into a surface, its flat windows and thinly grooved walls becoming an extension of the cliff-face surfaces that were used to prepare for the climb. Precisely because the film's argument is to refuse the cultural construction of difference between natural and built environments, and to defy the prohibition on treating big buildings as fully public space, to speak of the tower becoming a "face" is not just a handy pun, but a response to an actual literalism produced by Chris Hilton's persona on screen.⁵⁴ Dressed as The Human Fly, he visibly becomes not a Marvellous super-hero who can rival the phallic spire, but (especially in long shot) something quite familiar and "natural" to Australians -- an insect crawling on its face [fig. 6].

This is one way in which A Spire does in the vernacular sense "bring down" Sydney Tower, and mock its forbidding



Fig. 6
A Spire: Chris Hilton on the face of Sydney Tower

Source: Chris Hilton

pretensions. It makes the Tower tangible to people (and it is important that in the interview I quoted above, Chris Hilton speaks of reducing the Tower to "a human scale", not of "cutting it down to size"). But is that all? By itself, this action need be nothing more than a stylish, daring, but ultimately pointless reassertion of the old egalitarian ethos and its "boys' own" concern with appearances. If that were the case, to make too much out of the pun on face -- to read A Spire as simply exposing a social production of faciality by inscribing a sign of the "little man" on a great white Majority wall -- would be to return the film to the dialectic of rivalry that I think it succeeds in escaping. In fact, a whole series of changes follows from this "slight dodge in the real image" (Xavier Audouard's phrase for a perceptual shift that pulls in the observer to construct the simulacrum) which has the man becoming an insect while the Tower becomes a face.⁵⁵

As Massumi points out, the concept of "double becoming" in A Thousand Plateaus provides a way of theorising a positive force of simulation without reference to models and copies. The term "becoming", often taken by hasty critics to mean the silly idea that you can do whatever you want, designates a concept with a quite precise structure and a process with specific limitations. First, becoming must always involve at least two terms, not one in isolation, swept up in a process that transforms them both; if a man is becoming-insect, the insect is also changing. Second, double becoming involves an "aparallel evolution", not a specular or dualistic structure,

connecting heterogeneous terms;⁵⁶ when a man is becoming-insect, the insect is not becoming "man", but something else (to take up one of the unfortunate examples favoured by Deleuze and Guattari, while the warrior is becoming-woman, the woman may be becoming-animal).

Third, a man does not become a "real" insect, but becoming is not a fiction that he does; becoming is "real", but what is real is the becoming -- the process, or the medium, in-between terms. Fourth, this medium of becoming is always minoritarian: "in a way, the subject in a becoming is always Man, but only when he enters a becoming-minoritarian that rends him from his major identity" (291). This is the most important sense in which becoming is double, since there are "two simultaneous movements, one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority".⁵⁷ Becoming, then, is by definition an undoing of Man, and an un-making of the Face which is "the form under which man constitutes the majority, or rather the standard on which the majority is based" (292)

Now, I suggested that in A Spire, two distinct becomings are produced by the "slight dodge in the real image" of Chris Hilton climbing the turret. In a first phase, a man is becoming-fly as the tower is becoming-face. However, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, a becoming-Man, and thus a becoming-Face, is impossible. Moreover, the homely Australian face on which a fly crawls (and from which Hilton euphorically calls "I feel totally fucking comfortable! I can't believe it!

I feel comfortable!") is no longer the awesome panoptic Face that dominates the corporate landscape. Something happens in-between, and I think that it takes a complex form of double becoming: in a second phase, a man is becoming-fly as the fly is becoming-woman, with the Face becoming face as medium. One of the satisfying things about this possibility is that it is usually "woman" who provides the fertile ground or medium in which another's becoming can be defined. In Massumi's otherwise wonderful analysis of David Cronenberg's remake of The Fly, for example, the woman left pregnant after Brundle-Fly's fabulous trajectory passively represents "the powers that be" who "squelch" his hopes for creating a new form of life (94-5). There is no speculation as to whether her reluctance to play madonna to a race of "overmen as superflies" might involve a becoming of her own.

Why speak of a becoming-woman of the Fly in A Spire in the first place? The concept of "becoming-woman" certainly does not interest me in the guise of a general Good Thing.⁵⁸ However I do think that beyond the "image" of the Fly on the face of Sydney Tower (and sweeping it up in a becoming) there is a narrative process of simulation in A Spire by which, as Chris Hilton is becoming The Human Fly, the Human Fly becomes "Fay Gray" -- that is to say, a figure of "home", but also of displacement; of residency, but also of being evicted; of settlement, but also of fugitive status; in other words, the bearer of an amalgamated Otherness created by modern corporate strategy, and supposed to be excluded from its place.⁵⁹

I think this happens towards the end of the climb as the

moment of arrival is approaching. Once The Fly starts crawling up the turret, it looks more and more likely that he'll make it ("This is very exposed ... I feel strangely calm, though -- it's not much higher than a tree"). At the same time, the sound-track shifts our attention to the impropriety of his being there and to the question of his descent: "I wonder if there'll be any people in the observation deck when I get there?" There are people; we see them see him; he whoops "they're all looking bloody amazed!", and keeps on crawling towards one of the most amazing climaxes to an adventure I have seen. As one stunned onlooker put it to me after watching the video, "boy climbs tower -- and falls in".⁶⁰

Chris heaves himself over the ledge, half-somersaults, kicking wildly in the air -- and then can't shake his boots from their straps. In the place of a generically appropriate shot of the conqueror standing upright proudly to possess the view, there is a comically repeated little sequence of two disembodied red legs flailing diagonally against the sky, struggling furiously with floating green ribbons. The legs finally disappear over into the top of the Tower, two hands appear on the ledge, and then a head -- which gazes not out at the landscape, but directly down the ropes still brushing against the turret's face. The camera goes down the rope ("well I'm at the top and there's no-one here to meet me, over..."), back up the rope, and then for a brief freeze frame the head at the top of the Tower looks straight down the rope as it drops ("They should be arriving soon, I'd say").

This is not a Faustian moment. There is no overview from

the Tower: instead, a wonderful aerial sequence, circling the Tower on a horizontal plane with the turret, celebrates Chris Hilton's achievement (and discreetly shows those unfamiliar with Sydney what its magnitude has been). No-one comes to take him away, throw him out of the Tower or punish his appropriation of the heights: "Well, I've been here fifteen minutes now and no-one's come to get me and yet a security guard saw me in there, so I'm just going to go down the stairs now, I've found a way in, so I'll see what happens ...". What happens is completely banal: he walks out of the building, his ropes in his bag, and saunters away up the street. An interview ends the story: "So I just walked sort of nonchalantly off, I was feeling quite calm, I wasn't feeling agitated, so I just strolled as if I owned the place and caught a taxi in Pitt St."

Home voyage

I want to make three points in conclusion.

"I just strolled as if I owned the place": it would be easy now to read the Human Fly's cool, controlled descent allegorically as Fay Gray's getaway -- a riposte to the proprietorial violence structuring the imaginary of King Kong's Final Decision. By appropriating the symbolic high-point of corporate power in the city, the Fly becoming-Fay could assert, with an act of temporary occupation ("as if I owned the place"), that residents' action, and a residents' politics, can sometimes succeed "against all the odds".

Yet that would be one of the edifying little tales of resistance with which criticism perhaps too often rests content. More pointedly, I think, A Spire asserts its residents' politics by redefining the "voyage/home" opposition that determines so much about sexuality and space under capitalism (and of which the story of King Kong remains, in all its variants, a classic and haunting expression). In the space of a boys' own adventure, "home" is the feminised place of stasis that functions as beginning and end. The voyage, a masculinised phase of change and development, is the action in between. On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming turns this model inside out. Since "the in-between" of becoming is always a minoritarian process, and since a becoming moves toward another minor term that is also involved in becoming, Man is the name of the term that is simply left behind.

PM Advertising's yuppie King Kong follows the boys' own logic when he refuses to make a "home" with Fay and foreclose his financial adventures. Throwing her off the tower is just his way of saying he isn't ready to settle down. If A Spire had followed this logic, the space and time of the "voyage" to the top of the turret should have been clearly distinguished from the worlds of "home" and street. That doesn't happen, but neither are we launched into a process of perpetual transformation. What happens in A Spire is more like a polemical expansion of the public space of the street to include the top of the Tower, and an extension of the temporality of "home" to incorporate the voyage. Chris Hilton

follows a "smooth" trajectory -- into a bus, up the Tower, down the stairs, into a taxi -- that, far from defining a break from the setting of everyday life, extends the hours of labour inventing and testing home-made tools, talking with friends, practising in the back-yards, the cliffs, and the car-parks available round the city. The logical consequence is that since the concept of "home" now subsumes "adventure" (dynamism, change, thus time as well as space), it is no longer interiority and enclosure alone, but also exteriority, and surface.

"Home" in this sense does not mean a state of "domesticity", nor does it signify "ownership". It is a version of the active principle that de Certeau calls "practising place". My second point follows from this. It is possible that my analysis is overly fanciful, a paranoid reading, and that nothing as serious as a rethinking of ideologies of home and voyage can really be at stake in a short video about an eccentric and inconsequential episode in the history of the inner city -- the story of what one interviewee in A Spire calls "just another mad person in Sydney".

Yet the very elements that I've just mentioned were sufficiently serious for the ABC-TV broadcast version of A Spire to eliminate them. There are several differences between the independent video I've been discussing, and the broadcast version. Primarily, the series framework I Can't Stop Now pulled the story closer to the "passional monomaniac" aspect of the adventure; there was more emphasis on the "black hole"

of personal obsession, and less on the "white wall" of inscribing social criticism. The film was shortened by fifteen minutes, chunks of the "digressive" discussion footage removed, and more biographical information provided. This is to be expected with professionalisation, and not remarkable in itself.

More interesting, however, is a small step taken in the TV version that is not really required by the codes of broadcast quality. In the first video, there are no significant images of anyone "left at home" while Hilton climbs the tower. There is a quick good-bye at the bus stop, we hear the voices on the two-way radio, but there are so many participant others intercut with the scenes of the Fly on the tower, and they are so dispersed in space and time, that there is no place constructed to be occupied by a singular Other to the Man on the Voyage. The TV version restores that place. Partly because it cuts out several talking heads in order to condense the action, extra emphasis is thrown on two new scenes included for broadcast, involving a quite new figure. A young woman, whom the cultural logic of narrative invites us to see as wife/girlfriend/sister, is represented remembering her feelings about the idea of the climb, then sending messages and advice from the climber's home base.

Maria Maley on screen is a woman of great dignity and sang-froid who completely fails to create an impression of "feminine" anxiety. But with this one formal gesture, the man/voyage, woman/home, structure of the boy's own adventure is reimposed on the film, and the spatial hierarchy dividing

the top of the Tower from everyday space is re-established. However I don't think that this spoils the film or distorts or co-opts its "message". As a half-hour TV program about the built environment, the broadcast version of A Spire still works extremely well. What interests me about the changes is rather what they suggest about the cultural context in which a Spire appeared, and thus its critical impact within it.

In spite of its long association in theoretical discourse with a problem of (white) Femininity, it was class that represented the unrepresentable for Judith Mayne in her analysis of 1933, American Depression, King Kong. Class was also, if not unrepresentable, then certainly unmentionable in the "popular" culture of Australian egalitarianism -- the proprieties of which were so shamelessly flouted in the 1980s by the brutal truths of postmodern corporate culture. Yet, in one gesture of routine editing to brighten A Spire for broadcast, there is a very clear definition of something still "unrepresentable", or out of bounds, in Australian public media in 1989. It is neither class, nor the feminine sex, nor any classic figure of the Other, but, quite simply, the possibility of a non-climactic and "homely" boys' adventure. What the broadcast version restores to A Spire is more than an anchoring image of woman, and a conventional distinction between home and the voyage. It restores what depends on these -- a sense of the place of a "proper" masculinity. The fabulous Human Fly becoming Fay Gray is more simply and more normally Chris Hilton, a man "in a flame-red climbing suit".

Yet my last point is not so pessimistic. If the TV

version of A Spire restored to it some proprieties, this is an indication of the extent to which both films, indeed the whole "adventure", were successful as a critique of the assumptions about masculinity, spectacle and city space asserted by John Bond in the quotation from which I began. ABC-TV's revision of The Human Fly's fabulous becoming as Chris Hilton's "personal obsession" was made possible, perhaps necessary, by the degree to which A Spire proclaims the Tower "an ego thing" -- in the sense that John Bond disavowed.

Chris Hilton made a spectacle of himself, and then helped make a film about it. He produced a social analysis with an act of exhibitionism and then exhibited his analysis in public. In practising this mode of (very athletic) effeteness, he brought down the Tower not by renouncing the heights, but by reaching them instead. In this way, he invented a form of vernacular criticism which does not miss the point about the kind of wealth and power invested in urban towers -- but rather, makes a spectacle about that very point.

NOTES to Chapter Four

1. Warren Montag, "What is at Stake in the Debate on Postmodernism?", in Postmodernism and its Discontents: Theories, Practices ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: Verso, 1988), 95-96.

2. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 92-3. Further references in parentheses in the text.

3. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 260-265. Further references in parentheses in the text.

4. In my view, "movement" is unequivocally masculinised in white Australian narrative traditions only when structured as "voyage" -- that is, as goal-directed and entailing the possibility of "progress". Aboriginal nomadic movement, historically (mis)conceived in this framework as "aimless", is thus assimilated in a Romantic mode to the feminine, the primal and the timeless. This famous passage from Charles Sturt's Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia (1849) is one example from a vast archive of texts:

Men of undoubted perseverance and energy had tried to work their way to that distant and shrouded spot. A veil hung over Central Australia that could neither be pierced nor raised. Girt around by deserts, it almost appeared as if Nature had intentionally closed it upon civilised man, that she might have one domain on earth's wide field over which the savage might roam in freedom.

Cited in Ross Gibson, The Diminishing Paradise: Changing Literary Perceptions of Australia (Sydney and London: Angus & Robertson, 1984), 126-7. See also Kay Schaffer, Women and the bush: forces of desire in the Australian cultural tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

5. Deleuze and Guattari, ch. 7. The face can also form, they say, in a black blotch/white hole (Rorschach) system, but the dominance of the white wall/black hole image in their account is explained like this:

The face is not a universal. It is not even that of the white man: it is White Man himself, with his broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes. The face is the typical European, what Ezra Pound called the average sensual man ... Not a universal, but facies totius universi. Jesus Christ superstar: he invented the facialization of the entire body and spread it everywhere (the Passion of Joan of Arc, in close-up). Thus the face is by nature an entirely

specific idea, which did not preclude its acquiring and exercising the most general of functions: the function of ... binarization" (176).

6. See also A Thousand Plateaus, ch. 5, especially 120-1.

7. These difficulties have given feminist theory and cultural studies immensely productive materials to work with. See, for example, the rich theorisation of a "normative materiality" that allows Judith Butler to displace analogical and additive models of the relations between racism, sexism and homophobia with an analysis of "vectors" of power; Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex" (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

8. The polemical relation that Deleuze and Guattari maintained with psychoanalysis in the 1970s is well known, and now all too likely to frame and limit current readings of their work. It is the case that in theorising "facialization" as a mixed semiotic of signifi~~ance~~ and subjectification, paranoia and monomania, interpretation and passionality, Deleuze and Guattari have the practice of psychoanalysis itself in mind, amongst other examples (125). This is hardly surprising, since the lines connecting interpretation delirium, theorisation, and psychoanalytic desire were first drawn, as Deleuze and Guattari are well aware, by Freud himself.

9. On the distinction between an "individuated text" -- the product of a practice of differentiation -- and "the individual text" pervasive in critiques of US literary theory, see Anne Freadman, "Sandpaper", Southern Review 16.1 (1983), 161-73, and my discussion of Freadman's formalism in The Pirate's Fiancée: feminism, reading, postmodernism (London: Verso, 1988), 1-16, 271. Freadman's concept of individuation as the product or outcome of a differential practice is compatible with both De Certeau's "spatial story" and Deleuze's theory of simulation, discussed below. On the practical value of readings for Cultural Studies, see Tania Modleski, "Some Functions of Feminist Criticism, or The Scandal of the Mute Body", October 49 (Summer 1989), 3-24, and Graeme Turner, "Dilemmas of a cultural critic: Australian cultural studies today." Australian Journal of Communication 16 (1989), 1-12.

10. A Thousand Plateaus, ch. 3.

11. Cited in Michael Laurence, "Now, the billion-dollar game comes to the boil", Sydney Morning Herald Aug. 15, 1987.

12. Cited in Laurence.

13. This proposal was eventually rejected ("Carr cuts skyscraper plans down", The Sydney Morning Herald, Aug. 31 1987). On the history of property speculation in Sydney, see

M.T. Daly, Sydney Boom, Sydney Bust (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982), and Leonie Sandercock, Cities for Sale (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977). On the more recent impact of the Pacific Rim tourist and construction industries on Australian cities, see Abe David and Ted Wheelwright, The Third Wave: Australia and Asian Capitalism (Sydney: The Left Book Club, 1989).

14. In fact, Skytower failed to "get up", as journalists say; the site was sold to Bond's Japanese partner and, at the time of writing, it remains a hole in the ground pending floorspace transfer negotiations affecting other city sites.

15. Jane Gallop, Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction (London: Macmillan, 1982), ch. 3.

16. Andrew Ross, No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture (New York: Routledge, 1989).

17. See David Harvey, The Urbanisation of Capital (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

18. My analysis is not directly concerned with the political economy of the 1987-89 property boom, but with the politics of spectacle that played a small part in that boom. The more significant economic factors included a huge shift of investment interests to assets acquisition after the 1987 stockmarket crash and the subsequent easing of interest rates, combined with the reintroduction of negative gearing for rental properties in the mid-1980s by the Federal government.

19. See Sylvia Lawson, "Art in Bondage", Australian Society 8.8 (Aug. 1989), 52-3, and Stuart Macintyre, "Tall Poppies", Australian Society 8.9 (Sept. 1989), 8-9.

20. Peter Cryle, The Thematics of Commitment: The Tower & The Plain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 9.

21. Ada Louise Huxtable, The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: The Search for a Skyscraper Style (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 8.

22. Jean Baudrillard, America (London: Verso, 1989); Paul Virilio, "The Overexposed City", Zone 1/2 (nd), 14-31.

23. R.E. Somol, "'You Put Me in a Happy State': The Singularity of Power in Chicago's Loop", Copyright 1 (1987), 98-118. Further references in parentheses in the text.

24. Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), ch. 1.

25. De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 91-6. I discuss the problems of extending this high-density model of "descent" to other social landscapes in ch. 2 above.

26. While it is consistent with de Certeau's critique in The Practice of Everyday Life of the work of Michel Foucault - whom in that book de Certeau, like many other commentators, mistakes for an exponent rather than a critic of the concept of "total" power (62-63) -- this pull back toward the grounding categories of an anti-theoretical populism is quite at odds with de Certeau's own, practically Foucauldian, efforts to theorise the historical emergence of "popular culture" as an object of study, and the matrix of power-knowledge relations defining such study today (131-164). See the collaboratively written chapter "The Beauty of the Dead: Nisard" (ch.8) and the essays on Foucault in De Certeau's Heterologies (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

27. On this issue, see John Frow, "Michel de Certeau and the Practice of Representation", Cultural Studies 5.1 (1991), 52-60, and Tony Schirato, "My space or yours? De Certeau, Frow and the meaning of popular culture", Cultural Studies 7.2 (1993), 282-91.

28. See M. Christine Boyer, "The Return of Aesthetics to City Planning", in Philosophical Streets: New Approaches to Urbanism ed. Dennis Crow (Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 1990. 93-112); and Dean MacCannell, Empty Meeting Grounds: The tourist papers (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 87-113.

29. Australian Financial Review, June 15 1989, 47-9. I assume that "Fay Wray" becomes "Fay Gray" for legal reasons. As always, the interesting thing is the use of the first name of the "original" actress to identify the role of King Kong's female other.

30. See Noel Sanders, "Azaria Chamberlain and popular culture", Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader ed. John Frow and Meaghan Morris (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 86-101. On Uluru as a focus of contemporary Aboriginal as well as white nationalist myth-making, see Ann McGrath, "Travels to a Distant Past: The Mythology of the Outback", Australian Cultural History 10 (1991), 113-24.

31. Mike Davis, "Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism" in Postmodernism and Its Discontents: Theories, Practices, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: Verso 1988, 87.

32. I take the notion of "waste product" from Patricia Mellencamp, Indiscretions: Avant-Garde Film, Video, and Feminism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 142-5. Australia has historically enjoyed high levels of home ownership, and owning a house has been a working-class ideal and figures as such in national mythology. On "home ownership" as an architectural history, see Robin Boyd, Australia's Home (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

33. Scott Lash and John Urry, The End of Organised Capitalism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 295f. Further references in parentheses in the text. Lash and Urry are less pessimistic about this "layer" than Bourdieu, preferring to see the "new petit bourgeois" as a member of the lower echelons of the service class. On the implications of these debates for cultural analysis, see John Frow, Cultural Studies and Cultural Value (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

34. Marshall Berman, All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity (London: Verso, 1983), 39, 67-68.

35. Rosalyn Deutsche, "Architecture of the Evicted", Strategies, 3 (1990), 176.

36. Lash and Urry, 290. My emphasis.

37. Yann Lardeau, "Touche pas à la femme blanche", Traverses 8 (Mai 1977), 116-24. Translations mine. Further references in parentheses in the text.

38. In contrast, see Donna Haraway's strong analysis of a 1982 Hallmark greeting card ("Getting Even"), featuring a scared little Kong harassed in his bed by a giant blonde woman at his window; Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 160-2. Because Haraway bases her comparison on a culture-specific as well as historical reading of Kong's tragedy in the Schoedsack and Cooper film ("for the white inflamed imagination he was the icon of the captive black man's love for the white woman. Beast and 'primitive', Kong was lynched"), she is able to define the force of the contemporary comic image; "The "Cruise missile will not enter this domestic scene to save a black homosexual" (162).

39. This question is insistent in the iconography of Guillermin's King Kong, not only in Kong's love-scenes with "Dwan" (Jessica Lange), but also in gross close-ups of a huge bolt closing the village gate. See also Robert Anton Wilson, "Project Parameters in Cherry Valley by the Testicles", Semiotext(e), 14, SF (1989), 337-43.

40. Jacques Attali, Noise: The Political Economy of Music (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 109. I discuss Jameson's use of Baudrillard in "Panorama: The Live, The Dead and The Living", Island in the Stream ed. Paul Foss (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1988), 160-87.

41. Judith Mayne, "'King Kong' and the Ideology of Spectacle", Quarterly Review of Film Studies 1.4 (1976), 373-87. Further references in parentheses in the text.

42. I discuss the "formula" of Baudrillard's writing on hyperreality in The Pirate's Fiancée: feminism, reading, postmodernism (London: Verso, 1988), 187-211.

43. "Sydney's Human Fly", Daily Mirror Feb. 2, 1987; "Exclusive: The Human Fly", People March 23, 1987.

44. On the resistance of textual materials, see Anne Freadman, "Sandpaper", 173.

45. See Marc Augé's useful discussion of de Certeau in Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), 79-85.

46. See the Introduction to this thesis; on "back to the City" rhetoric, see my "Sydney Tower", Island Magazine 9/10 (1982), 53-61.

47. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam give an introduction to the history of action-adventure in Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), chs 3,4.

48. Susan Ruddick points out that one problem with the strategy/tactics distinction is that "in the long durée tactics disappear from view without a trace" ("Heterotopias of the Homeless: Strategies and Tactics of Placemaking in Los Angeles", Strategies 3, 1990, 184-201; see also Frow, "Michel de Certeau and the Practice of Representation", and Schirato, "My space or yours? De Certeau, Frow and the meaning of popular culture". While Ruddick finds the distinction useful for describing how the homeless make use of "spaces that have been strategically organised by other actors", she suggests that it needs refinement to allow for the relative permanence in particular places that can be gained by this use of space: "the homeless, simply by their presence in a particular place, change its symbolic meaning" (191).

49. Personal correspondence.

50. See Eric Alliez and Michel Feher, "Notes on the Sophisticated City", Zone 1/2 (nd) 40-55; Guiliana Bruno, "Ramble City: Postmodernism and Blade Runner", October 41 (1987), 61-74; and, for a metonymic reading which changes the plot of the film to make it fit a broader allegory, David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 309-14.

51. Brian Massumi, "Realer than Real: The Simulacrum According to Deleuze and Guattari", Copyright 1 (1987), 90-7. Further references in parentheses in the text.

52. Jean Baudrillard, Simulations trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 11.

53. Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum" trans. Rosalind Krauss, October 27 (1983), 48. Also in Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 253-66.

54. On literalism, see Paul Willemen, Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory (London and Bloomington: BFI and Indiana University Press, 1994), ch. 1.

55. Cited by Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum", 49. Deleuze develops the importance of this "slight dodge", or clinamen, for his theory of simulation in "Lucretius and the Simulacrum", The Logic of Sense, 266-79.

56. Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 10. On becoming, see ch. 10 ("Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible..."), 232-309.

57. For Deleuze and Guattari, "minoritarian" as becoming or process is distinct from "minority" as an aggregate or state (A Thousand Plateaus, 291). Terms like "ethnic minority" are treated with some scorn throughout their work, where the term "minor" has a musical derivation and is used to think ethnicity (particularly in their Kafka) in terms of metamorphosis. I discuss the minor in "'Too Soon, Too Late': Reading Claire Johnston", 1970-81", Dissonance: Feminism and the Arts 1970-90 ed. Catriona Moore (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 126-138.

58. Useful feminist discussions of this concept include Rosi Braidotti, Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), ch. 5, and Patterns of Dissonance: A study of women in contemporary philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), ch.5; Elizabeth Grosz, "A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics", Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy ed. Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 187-210, revised in Volatile Bodies: Toward A Corporeal Feminism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), ch. 7; Alice Jardine, Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), ch. 10.

59. By "including" the Tower/face in this process of double-becoming, filmic narration in A Spire becomes simulation in Deleuze's sense at the very moment when "it doesn't even work to invoke the model of the Other, because no model resists the vertigo of the simulacrum" (Deleuze, 53).

60. Thanks to James Hay for this observation.

Chapter Five

ECSTASY AND ECONOMICS: A PORTRAIT OF PAUL KEATING

Watching the Treasurer

*I want to believe the beautiful lies
the past spreads out like a feast.*

*Television is full of them & inside
their beauty you can act: Paul Keating's*

*bottom lip trembles then recovers,
like the exchange rate under pressure*

*buoyed up as the words come out --
elegant apostle of necessity, meaning*

*what rich Americans want, his world is
like a poem, completing that utopia*

*no philosopher could argue with, where
what seems, is & what your words describe*

*you know exists, under a few millimetres
of invisible cosmetic, bathed*

in a milky white fluorescent glow.

John Forbes, The Stunned Mullet (1988)¹

This is a poem about television -- in particular, about watching a famous politician perform on Australian TV some time in the mid-1980s. It is also a poem about glimpsing utopia: it defines a social landscape (a scene of symbolic consumption) and an imaginary space of sorts (televisual); as a means of passage between them it invokes a man's voice, "off". To imagine this voice (which is not like a voice-off, really, but like watching TV with the sound turned down, an "unheard melodies" effect), you have to know that we are watching Paul Keating, Federal Treasurer (1983-1991) of the Australian Labor government (1983-96), and that he is famed for his suits and his eloquence.² The elegance is Italian, the eloquence Australian, and it comes in two main styles, or, as fashion people say, two "stories" -- gutter invective (the working-class "boy from Bankstown" story) and policy jargon (the "corporate" story). There were variations and combinations -- stirring, visionary speeches, violent, hilarious one-liners -- but a basic synthesis of "street-smart" and "high-flyer" modes is what defines, by resolving old class-cultural oppositions, the Keating semantic field.

The poem is about the smooth and ecstatic story rather than the tough and abusive -- though that's there, that's part of the ecstasy, always trembling in potential along that bottom lip. The press always savoured Keating's parliamentary insults (the Australian once printed a retrospective, including "sleazebags", "box-heads", "harlots", "sucker", "perfumed gigolo", "criminal garbage", "clowns" and "gutless spiv", while omitting his most famous interpellation of a

political opponent, "you stupid foul-mouthed grub"), and relished his often cruel jokes as proverbs. But the Treasurer doing economics live on talk shows was really something to be seen. He could mesmerise the camera with those great big burning brown eyes, then move in with a stream of jargon which seemed on the surface unintelligible, and yet which let you know, quite simply and profoundly, that really everything would be all right if you just suffered a little more, and let him take care of business.

That implies -- to decode what you're saying -- if the exchange rate falls, inflation will rise. But if the government or the country got no benefit from a rising dollar which should have had lower inflation, because basically business fattened its margins and profits, surely no-one's arguing now if the exchange rate falls somewhat that that's going to be added to prices. I mean -- in a slower economy prices are going to be unwound and inflation will come back. It's as simple as that.

Paul Keating, 1990 ³

There's an S&M glow about Keating's image as Treasurer. Australians spent the 1980s laughing about the "sex appeal" of Mrs Thatcher, and at infantile English obsessions with schoolmarms, knickers and canes, but in the image of this tall, dark, saturnine man there was something, not similar (no elocution lessons for Keating), but comparable -- a "Mr

Murdstone" factor, with a softening, comic-romantic touch of Frank Langella's Dracula.⁴ Somehow, too, it was crucial to Keating's aura that he is still a practising Catholic. Apart from adding a touch of the perverse and the fanatic to his Grim Reaper image ("a true believer, in this day and age?"), his Catholicism put him in the great tradition of Irish-Australian Labor leaders. This claim as legitimate heir to the "faith" of a mythic, martyred past could sometimes help, in some contexts, to counter recurring image problems over whether his policies fitted too well with his yuppified personal tastes: how a "traditional" Labor leader could be a free marketeer and deregulator, buy French antiques and a Sydney mansion instead of "living with the electorate", go pig-shooting with billionaire real estate developers, be "mates" with media magnates and financiers -- while redistributing income upwards in, he claimed, the interests of the working class.

Yet these image problems were also, like the elegance and the eloquence, constituents of his image. Australians spent the decade laughing at an airhead Ronald Reagan, and at bizarre American confusions between history and Hollywood films, but the televisual voice of Keating (articulate, quick on the uptake, smoothly working class) had a power to rouse anxiety about the grounding of our sense of history. Questions of history (and a sense of confusion) arose in the gap between how he sounded ("traditional Labor"), and what he said as "the closest we have had to a right-of-centre Treasurer in this country in the last 50 years".⁵ What, now, is tradition? --

political analysts asked. What is the difference between "performance" and "policy", when speech is action in media? Once, these could be contrasted as the showy to the solid, the ephemeral to the enduring; Keating could, and did, "make history" on a celebrity radio talk-back show by frightening financial markets into driving the dollar down.⁶ What is happening between folklore and economics, popular memory and political calculation, entertainment and statecraft, national (rhetorical) ideals and global (economic) imperatives -- desire and "law"? These questions formed the substance of self-reflective media columns; so placed, they intensified the sense of confusion that such columns, pragmatically, attempt to dissipate.⁷

This is a study of "Watching the Treasurer" -- of the poem, and the social experience that the poem involves for me. It is not directly about those questions of history that shape its sense of involvement. It is about "Paul Keating" only as a media image of history, and only insofar as the poem makes him an allegorical figure of a process of image production, "watching" included, happening on an interface between economic discourse, newspapers and television. My portrait is of this figure; it is made with mixed materials (including a genre little used in cultural studies, the literary close reading) and my object of analysis is the media process of producing "history" itself. However, since "watching" is certainly social, I do say something about the political context involved.

The unsaid assumption underlying all descriptions is experience beyond lived experience, the experience of the other and of the fiction. In description we articulate the time and space that are absent from the context at hand, the lived experience of the body. Our interest in description may be stated most often as an interest in style, but in fact it is equally an interest in closure. All description is a matter of mapping the unknown onto the known.

Susan Stewart⁸

In the late 1980s, I came to be aware of feeling an entirely new emotion: adulation of a national leader. I felt it in the comic-ironic mode that is culturally natural to Australians of my general social background (mixed working-class and petit-bourgeois Irish-Australian). I also felt it in the momentary mode that can be natural to people whose emotions are media-sensitive. It would overwhelm me on occasions of national solemnity (watching Budget speeches, Special Economic Statements, or election debates on TV), but it could also catch me in the middle of my most basic domestic activities -- peeling vegetables, washing up, flipping through theory journals.

When I heard his voice in the house, I was capable of dropping everything to run and fling myself down in front of the television calling out ecstatically "It's him! It's him!".

I use "ecstasy" here in the vernacular sense of "a quick rush". But I also felt this emotion profoundly; in a punctual economy, duration is not equivalent to intensity or depth. Even when the country went into a recession that Keating probably helped to cause, I always wanted to believe what he said; usually, I did. Yet my attitude to most of the Treasurer's policies wavered from hostile to ambivalent. His attitude to my kind of politics was frankly contemptuous ("basket-weaving").

I say all this in a documentary rather than a confessional mode. This is the kind of experience in which one realises how powerfully it can be true that "I" is an other. And "I" was not alone. When the Treasurer withheld his media presence for weeks, even months, on end, there was wailing and gnashing of teeth in editorials and business columns ("Has Keating Lost It?"); strong men wept on television for the future of our country. The rejoicing when he "returned" was a wonder to behold ("Mr Keating emerges from his bunker"): headlines shouted that he was picking up reins, handling gears and pulling levers again: strong men chuckled tenderly at replay footage of his jokes. A feminist study of Keating discourse -- which was mostly but by no means entirely produced by irritably fascinated men -- could learn much about the paradoxes of "male homosocial desire" binding our male-dominated, homophobic state culture.⁹ My documentary impulse here is more towards exploring the conditions of my own affective involvement in this culture. Women produced "Keating discourse" too, and I am not convinced that the feminist

concept of "male-identifying" (which does come to mind) is adequate to examining what happened, or what was at stake for us, when we did.

Of course, my "entirely new" emotion may well involve something that I have read about precisely in relation to other people -- in the past, and in countries where it is respectable, even normal (as it is not in Australia), to wave flags, cheer parades, and praise the nation. This is known to critical theory as the "aestheticisation of politics", and my response to the image of Keating could be said to take its canonical specular form: the constitution of the nation in the image of the body of the leader.¹⁰ If such a mapping of my unfamiliar experience onto a powerful historical precedent (and already available concept) does seem plausible to me, it is, in part, because of the questions that can then arise about its implausibility. For on the border between the unknown and the known -- or better, in the moment before closure -- something can still be said about other historical precedents, and other available concepts.

Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, for example, supports his account of "the ecstatic identification with a Leader" with a reading of Hans Jurgen Syberberg's Hitler, a film from Germany; concepts of spectacle and identification are crucial to theories of the aestheticisation of politics classically understood.¹¹ But I cannot easily relate my media memories of Hitler at the Nuremberg rallies -- or even of Reagan at the L.A. Olympics -- to Australian leadership images. It is useful to try, in fact: if to do so is to ignore common sense about a

massive disproportion in scale (and differences between cinema and television, not to mention "Hitler" and "Reagan"), it does illuminate recent imagings of the leadership benignly embodying the nation in our own political history as constitutively white and male, and thus as incarnating the violence of what Carole Pateman has aptly called the fraternal state.¹² Yet disproportion, like difference, matters. Apart from the risk such comparisons run of trivialising Nazism, and of devaluing the violence specific to other regimes, it is important that the leader of a client state is always touched by abjection. He is "unspectacular". However popular he may be, his need to grovel on behalf of the nation to its "great and powerful friends" acts as a check on patriotic urges to identify closely with him.

Furthermore, the Treasurer is not "a Leader". At best, he can only incarnate burning desire (as Keating did) to have the Prime Minister's position. The Treasurer's is certainly a powerful office, symbolically as well as politically: his actions massively impact on the lives of ordinary citizens, and thus on the fate of governments; media legend locates the basic passion of the Australian (male) body politic in the so-called "hip pocket nerve". But for this very reason, no Treasurer is capable of effecting, as Lacoue-Labarthe puts it, a "fusion of the community (in festival or war)" (70). Representing work and the management of economic inequality rather than festival or war, the Treasurer differentiates a community likely to find "fusion" only in a consensus to blame him for those disasters (drought, other people's wars,

commodity price fluctuations) everyone knows he can't control.

There is a related sense in which, if I look for historic Australian models of charismatic leadership, I find no spectacle, and few images at all. "Hitler" still circulates with "Reagan" in my everyday habitat of mixed American, European, Australian and Asian images; I might see them on television or in magazines at any given time. I much more rarely "see" Curtin, Chifley or Menzies, and, when I do, this rarity defines (as special but "minor") their media significance, as well as the exceptional status of the citizenly genres in which they most often appear; historical mini-series,¹³ documentary, special-event television. Yet these national figures have not simply been displaced, as a cultural purist might have it, by global icons. They circulate for me, in a low-key way, as stories: as clusters of "character" and "event" recalled in media history specials (tragic John Curtin, the alcoholic who "got up from the gutter" to lead the nation at war; saintly Ben Chifley, the railway worker who supervised the postwar reconstruction); as other people's memories in family or community contexts; in books that I read for research; as reference points for discussion in late night current affairs shows, or in the quality press. This often aural, sometimes literary discourse is not really "popular", now, in portent: more than subcultural or professional (although it is both), it might be described as ethnic.

Keating brought to Caucus and machine politics the disciplined infallibility of his Catholicism. Dressed with the smart severity of a Jesuit, he slid along the parliamentary lobbies carrying ambition as an altar boy cradles his missal, reflexes sharpened to strike heretics. Although steeped in Labor tradition personally handed to him by Jack Lang and Rex Connor, Keating was unburdened by the dead hand of the past; he pursued his passion for French antiques at Paddington and cultivated leaders of the financial community at the big end of town. Keating prayed to God and waited on history; he was still to discover a more complex world.

Paul Kelly¹⁴

In other circumstances -- those of the ideal identity between race, ethnos, and language community on which the European image of the "nation" has been based -- some elements of this discourse might support the totalising project that Lacoue-Labarthe, following Jean-Luc Nancy, calls "immanentism" (70). But I am "watching the Treasurer" in an immigrant nation, racially and culturally mixed beyond any possibility of dreaming its essence in an aesthetic of purity or "organic" form, and one with limited pretensions to economic and military autonomy. That is, I live in a society constituted -- in this respect, unexceptionally -- not in immanentism but in relationality. So I cannot sensibly oppose a localised aural tradition ("folklore") to a global media culture

("spectacle"). Theoretical problems with such dualisms aside, historically both have formed, and are forming, my "lived experience of the body" (watching, listening, talking), just as each assumes "experience of the other and of fiction".

But I can make distinctions between my international media culture and my other social knowledges. Only by doing so, in fact, can I say that something unusual about the figure of Keating was its simultaneous availability in several affective registers. Widely distributed for many years in diverse networks of cultural production -- conversation, newspapers, radio news and talk-back, daytime "women's" TV variety shows (the Midday Show) and prime-time family news (the 7.30 Report, A Current Affair), as well as heavily masculine late-night "analysis" shows (the Carleton-Walsh Report, Lateline) and weekend magazine programs (Sunday, Business Sunday) -- the figure of "Keating" was a constellation of anecdotes accessible to me equally and convergently as an appealing capitalised image, a nasty policy paradigm, an enthralling political drama, an unsettling ideological problem, an enigmatic object of analysis and -- in terms that Paul Kelly's portrait of Keating may serve to suggest -- a sentimental folktale.¹⁵

Of course, many politicians figure widely, if blandly, in the media. When John Forbes wrote "Watching the Treasurer", the Keating mythos had been accumulating depth and resonance longer than most; in Federal parliament since 1969, he arrived there already aureoled, at the age of 25, by rumours of ballot rigging. Australian news culture thrives on political intrigue

and economic scandal, mostly avoiding, by tacit agreement, harsh exposure of "private lives"; Keating's slightly sinister political reputation, and shockingly virtuous personal life, made him both desirable and legitimate as a popular narrative subject -- a mix of hero and villain.¹⁶ Indeed, a well-known folkloric episode (cited by Kelly to frame his portrait) has a Labor Senator in 1977 endowing a journalist with this mission: "You see that man; watch him because he's a political killer." Media coverage of Keating was driven by overt myth-making of the most extravagant kind. Kelly's gothic fantasy (1983) of what the young Keating was up to in 1977 is not unusual either for its emotional ambivalence or for the aggravated lyricism, the literariness that its subject elicits from a sober and sceptical journalist who (an excellent story-teller) now edits Rupert Murdoch's Australian.

For all its extravagance, Keating mythology was intensely and unusually coherent. As in Paul Kelly's text, much of this mythology was organised by precisely those legitimating figures of reconciliation -- of "Labor" with "the financial community", of "tradition" with a rejection of "the dead hand of the past" -- foundational for the consensus rhetoric and corporatist politics of the government in which Keating played only a part, but of which he then came to serve, at least in business and trade union contexts, as a living allegory. Most distinctive, however, was his personal reconciliation of messianic and monetary motifs. In 1988, Edna Carew opened the first chapter ("A good Catholic boy") of her romantic biography Keating by narrating this portent of his birth: "In

July 1944 the International Monetary Fund was born in the town of Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, USA".¹⁷ Spiritual truth is here taking precedence over chronological convention: if the IMF occupies the place most commonly reserved, in biography, for parents or even grandparents, the next paragraph reveals that Keating was in fact born six months earlier than the ancestral figure preceding him in the text.

More routinely, Keating was always being anointed and announced by Labor patriarchs. When not "personally handed" tradition by Lang and Connor, he was, as "the son of a boilermaker" turned small businessman, "breathing it in with his first gasp", or "at his father's knee" (while his mother, in most accounts, ran "a welcoming home").¹⁸ At the same time, he was always upwardly mobile, unburdened by origins, self-educated (leaving school at 15), accumulating cultural capital (classical music, Empire furniture, and notably, in a Taylorist touch, collecting clocks), considering a "Paris option", heading for "the big end of town". The conflict of tradition and experiment, faith and ambition, legitimacy and radical change was often reconciled in Keating folklore by manifestation scenes: Keating lectures the IMF/World Bank dignitaries ("Do something, don't just talk"); Keating berates the venerable Labor Party (officially born in 1891, the first parliamentary labor party in the world) as "a bastard of an organization".¹⁹ These scenes could manipulate diverse cultural contents, from provincial "world stage" strutting to esoteric factional hostility. Their form was generically organised by the story of the youthful Jesus sorting out the

elders in the temple.

Journalists writing portraits commonly recycle phrases, as well as themes and narrative structures, stored in the clippings archive (and in their aural trade memory). There are technical and contingent as well as culturally determinant reasons for any cluster of "character and event" to assume the shape that it does. But Keating materials are, like the binary structure that contains them, always already "steeped", if not in hagiography, then in historiographical traditions about the Labor Party. If Paul Kelly's Keating inhabits many subsequent media texts, his own is shaped stylistically as well as thematically, I suspect, by the anguished moral dualism structuring the great national epic of our post-War liberal culture, Manning Clark's six-volume A History of Australia (1962-1987). Kelly's "Keating at prayer" could be a direct descendant of that founder of the labor movement who, in one of Clark's own remarkable portraits, waited on history in the 1880s as one belonging "to that generation of divided men who had been fashioned on the Australian goldfields, men who worshipped two gods: the god of equality and the god of getting on".²⁰

For all this romantic legitimation and image saturation, one problem stubbornly remains with subsuming responses to Keating as Treasurer under an "ecstatic identification", as Lacoue-Labarthe puts it, "with a Leader who ... incarnates, in an immanent fashion, the immanentism of a community"(70). Very few Australians got ecstatic about Paul Keating.²¹ Even at the peak of his economic charisma in the mid-1980s, polls would

still declare that only 4% to 7% of Australians wanted him for leader -- in contrast to an approval rating of over 70% then accorded to the most popular Prime Minister in Australian history, R. J. Hawke. Whatever polls may or may not tell us about the distribution of political taste, this comparison ensured that popular refusal to identify with Keating was always a constitutive feature of his media image.

This raises questions about, once again, relationality rather than "immanence". If, as Michelle Rosaldo has argued, "emotions are about the ways in which the social world is one in which we are involved",²² then I must certainly restrict the scope of any claims I might make about "ecstasy". It is no revelation to say that, whatever other forms of support he may have enjoyed, Keating was aestheticised only by and for a "world" significantly involving intellectuals and media practitioners. By June 1991, when he failed in an early leadership bid that was widely supported by the press, this very thesis was being circulated by journalists thus enabled to reflect on their relations to "the rest" of Australian society in, for once, other than expressive terms. Some debated their relations to Keating in openly erotic terms: ABC-TV ran a self-reflexive Lateline program on "Seducing the Media", and there was some discussion of Derek Parker's book The Courtesans, a formal attack on the press gallery proposing (as its most senior woman member noted) to "throw the trollops out of the court!".²³

So in order to investigate the non-"immanentist" ecstasy and relational play of identity that I, as an addressee, a

consumer, and a citizen-referent of media discourse on the nation, have been calling "Paul Keating", a social restriction does not suffice. I need first to consider more closely some of the discourses of emotion circulating in this "world" that made my own response possible, and marginal.

II

The crucial thing to understand about Paul Keating is that he is a man of passion.

Craig McGregor²⁴

Ecstasy -- religious, sexual, political -- is, by any definition, an experience out of the ordinary. Greek ekstasis comes from existanai, to displace, or, as the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary has it, to "put out of place". Most dictionaries have special entries about poetic frenzy, mystic transport and divine rapture, states construed as exceptional in a prosaic and secular world. Dictionaries differ, however, in their understanding of that "place" (sometimes a "norm") from which poetry and divinity may either displace or expel us.

For the Shorter Oxford, it is the security of a self-identical subject (Man): in ecstasy one is, perhaps unpleasantly, placed "beside oneself" by anxiety or fear as well as "astonishment" and "passion". Some emphasis is given to seventeenth century "morbid" and nineteenth century "nervous" states. The Petit Robert follows the Shorter Oxford

through this history of modern pathology. However, it gives the experience of being "comme transportée hors de soi et du monde sensible" a more upbeat inflection of joy, felicity, and wonder: in this semantic world, the idea of being "carried away" more fully contains the possibility of communing with "l'être parfait, l'être infini, Dieu", and the non-ecstatic "place" is broadened to include all ordinary worldly experience. These differences could rashly be schematised by contrasting Protestant and Catholic, even empiricist and Cartesian, theories of subjectivity. They can safely be related as forms of "the ex-stasis, the outside-itself attributed to women by male speculation" which is, for Elizabeth Grosz in her commentary on Lacan's eulogy to St. Teresa, "the phallic refusal to accept an otherness not modeled on the same".²⁵

While both dictionaries work with the historical materials of the modern mind/body dichotomy, both define ecstasy as displacement without further specifying the nature of the relationship between the terms thus put in play; neither explicitly divides emotion from intellect, or opposes ecstasy to "reason". The American Heritage Dictionary does. Ecstasy is there not only "a state of exalted delight in which normal understanding is felt to be surpassed", but "a state of any emotion so intense that rational thought and self-control are obliterated" (my emphasis). This is not a fusional experience blurring the boundaries of the everyday self, but an upheaval internal to the subject; the normal hierarchy of relations between its constitutive parts is overthrown.

Instead of being taken "out" to experience the other as infinity and perfection, or even as anxiety, the subject undergoes an inner crisis in which one of its capacities (emotion) destroys, by metonymic violence, certain others (rational thought, self-control). By this definition, ecstasy is a violent process with destabilising effects; in ecstasy, one is radically, if momentarily, unbalanced.

Exactly these oppositional pairings of reason with control and emotion with intensity structure Craig McGregor's self-titled "social portrait" of Paul Keating. At the outset McGregor, a well-known journalist and critic of popular culture, claims that Keating is less strongly organised by "well-balanced reserve" than "the media people who have labelled him Mister Cool" may suppose. They associate coolness, he suggests, with Keating's gravitas and self-possession (control), as well as with such of his attributes as "economic policy", "corporate heavies", and a "monkish jesuitical air" -- all metonyms, I think, of "calculation" and thence of an excessive rationality. But these are inessential: strip them away and you find a "deep-seated capacity for emotion, anger and diatribe", "warmth and spirit" ("an intensity somewhat akin to the 'fire in the belly' Aneurin Bevan was said to have had"), and again, "fire and conviction". The (real) Keating as a man of passion, then, is opposed to the self-possessed (media) Keating as hot is to cold, and body to mind ("belly"/"monkish"). McGregor interprets this structure in class as well as gender-specific terms: passion is to calculation as the "naked" fighting of

"the scrum" (in Rugby League football, traditionally a working-class game) is to the "dark tailored suits" of money and power (78).

A stress on the overwhelming ("fire") and the volatile ("anger", "scrum") tempts McGregor's own discourse here towards ecstasy in a third sense, the "overpowering emotion" and "sudden access of intense feeling" that the Macquarie Dictionary casually posits without reference to any boundary or oppositional force, and without any mention of a self. This is ecstasy as pure event, as an intensity that "happens", a rush; the Macquarie emphasises the abstract energy that most dictionaries mark as a "surpassing" while spatialising, as fusion or crisis, its effects. In Jean Baudrillard's theory of media, ecstasy in this sense is an epiphany ("the quality proper to any body that spins until all sense is lost, and then shines forth in its pure and empty form") in which a term may "obliterate" others only because it spins free from binary structures: a term in ecstasy ceases to be "relative to its opposite" (thus annihilating its value), becoming "superlative, positively sublime, as if it had absorbed all the energy of its opposite".²⁶ Some of the more absorbed press portraits of Keating constructed him as sublime in just this way: "We're no match for him", fumed a ravished Alan Ramsey, spinning out on a cricket metaphor: "[not] another one like him in the Parliament ... the master with both ball and bat ... the complete political player ... the Bradman of politics."²⁷

In McGregor's text, however, there is a social

complication -- a referential catch that keeps his discourse hooked back in to a binary value system (and a realist practice of character analysis). Australian culture includes a strong tradition of dividing "reason" by associating intelligence with emotion and opposing both to intellectuality; an old mythology of the practical (renewed in clichés about the Man-of-few-words from the school-of-hard-knocks) positively values -- especially in men -- an inarticulate empathy and intuitiveness as signs of real smarts; women err on the side of the sensible, the plodding, even the calculating side of reason. Bob Hawke owed much of his popularity (which he called his "love affair with the Australian people") to a myth of his passionate nature -- his tears on television, his public temper tantrums, his chaotically twisted sentences and snappish little replies, his legendary drinking and philandering, his hard sacrifice of these to power; Hazel, his equally popular wife, was sensible. So by making passion crucial to our understanding of Keating, McGregor is contradicting a common view that in the 1980s we were governed not only by "divided men", but by a living binary opposition: the warm, intelligent Prime Minister and the cold, intellectual Treasurer, the all-round practical man and the "narrow" economic theorist.

So McGregor "humanises" Keating by taking him out of the cold zone of excessive rationality. However he then intensifies Keating in the warm zone, destabilising him again, while securing his own position as "balanced". McGregor concludes that Keating really is narrow, not because he is a

theorist but because, in his "bloody-minded" pragmatism and "intolerance", he isn't. Keating lacks in intellectuality, and here this is not a virtue: "he has little political theory to back him up, few general ideas, scorns the intellectual content of politics, relies on his instincts and trusts to his ferocity of purpose to get him through" (84) -- just another passionate man. His "political fire" reduced in an ecstasy of "bile" to the "white ash of the personal", Keating is all affect and no ideology -- and "anger without ideology breeds reaction".

Moderation is a great virtue in Australian political mythology:²⁸ to say that "theory" might help to supply it is to try to reconcile intelligence with intellectuality. However McGregor's faith in the restraining force of ideology -- taken as belief creatively organised by a coherent set of ideas -- already excludes his discourse from the mainstream of public rhetoric, where "ideology" now means a rigid adherence to "theory", and thence an extremist impracticality held to characterise both "the Left" and "far Right" of politics: ideology is the place of the other, and the other is always immoderate. Thus Julian Disney, then president of the Australian Council of Social Services, found Keating narrow for reasons opposed to McGregor's. On behalf of "hundreds of thousands of Australians now paying a heavy price", Disney attacked Keating's policy regime for its "economic dogma", its "simplistic and extremist theories", its "obsession with ideological machismo".²⁹

*I'm over forty, I've got four kids, I think it's
time to put the cue on the rack.*

Paul Keating, on being voted in a 1990 radio
poll "the sexiest man in Australia".

Narrowness is a formal topic in Keating portraiture.³⁰ Whatever value is attributed to the figure of the man himself (in this case, as lacking and as over-embodying "theory"), the topic permits a discussion not only of the qualities composing an ideal national leader (a political discourse of desire), but also of the proper distribution of thought to feeling, belief to action, doctrine to experience, and theory to practice in the matrix of a white-male-dominated, democratic public sphere (a philosophical discourse of management). Thus McGregor's "Keating" is at once an individualising analysis of a man with a fatal flaw, and an idealising expression of McGregor's own messianic yearning for the perfectly balanced Man that his subject ("all mouth and no ears") had failed to become -- a complete intellectual who could, blending passion and theory, realise the "great humane ideals of the Labor movement". Disney's interest-group rhetoric is not concerned with charismatic leadership. His Keating is merely a figure head for a reductive economic agenda ("machismo") forcing itself, at a terrible cost, on an obdurately complex society; he wants less ideology, and more compassion, in policy rather than persons.

However McGregor's plea for more, not less, ideology does resonate with the terms, if not always the values, of some

recent international debates about so-called postmodern politics. In this vicinity of my social world, McGregor's "essential Keating paradox" may seem less idiosyncratic, more entangled, in its troubling (dis)similarity, with other discourses exploring an instability to do with emotion in international media culture. In significantly different ways, several critics have suggested that a general shift is occurring in the relations between "affect" and "ideology" in mediated societies. As they try to define this shift, the term "ideology" pulls back from its Marxist-psychoanalytic entanglement with language and subjectivity, reverting to an older use in naming the object of a social capacity for something like "belief".³¹

For example, in It's A Sin: Postmodernism, Politics and Culture, Lawrence Grossberg finds a series of gaps opening up "between affect and ideology, between fans and fanatics", between "mattering" and "meaning" in postwar American culture.³² Carefully distinguishing "the specificity of American hegemony" under Reagan from Thatcherism in Britain, he argues that the New Right's project in the United States has worked most powerfully through a war of affect waged in and as popular culture, rather than by (as in Britain) the State. This war aims to reconstruct an American national-popular by divorcing "common sense" from faith, and from emotional investment: "Reaganism seems to have been built upon the increasingly generally shared mistrust of common sense which renders ideological differences less important than the passion of one's commitment" (32, my emphasis). So the

affect/ideology "gap" is also a "frontier" where the New Right is constructing America as "a powerful affectively charged but ideologically empty identity" (38).

Grossberg's analysis of this gap/frontier is historical, self-reflexive, and irreducibly culture-specific. By making me aware of inhabiting another country and a different social world, it usefully enables comparison. I cannot easily separate the state from the popular-cultural strategies of the Hawke-Keating regime: the hegemonic force of its tripartite corporatist alliance (government/ business/unions) depended on mobilising affect through a masculine-popular culture -- referring not, as in Grossberg's America, to rock and roll, TV and "youth", but to gambling, pubs and sport -- invested precisely by the "mateship" values which it aimed, ideologically, to reconstruct; simply put, worker solidarity was to be reconstituted under Labor as national economic competitiveness.³³ Affectively drawn into this alliance by family tradition and ethnic background, I was excluded less by gender than by a professional class formation that now leads me -- ideologically -- to privilege gender and race in a "leftist" way.

So there is much in Grossberg's account of postmodern affect that I can recognise as "mine". With his "increasingly unbridgeable chiasma which leaves us standing on the border of our affective relations, unable to anchor ourselves ideologically" (38), I am at no great distance from exactly the cultural space in which Australian commentators claim that economic rationalism (a philosophy shared since the 1980s by

all the major parliamentary parties) has reconstructed "Labor" as an ideologically empty identity -- with, however, a fading affective charge.³⁴ At the same time, I am distanced by feminism, as well as nationality, from aspects of Grossberg's account: the negotiation of a "gap" between mattering and meaning is not only foundational for feminism, but may, as Patricia Mellencamp has argued, characterise the historical experience of modernity for women;³⁵ indeed, what is quite new in my experience as an Australian woman is to find my own "affect" channelling towards an "ideological" mattering of national government. So when Grossberg writes of a postwar "dissolution of what we might call the 'anchoring effect' that articulates meaning and affect" (40), I am aware of a different past (of no such anchoring) as well as another present.

These differences can emerge for me because Grossberg's text is explicitly, in part, a self-portrait. This means that his claims about past and present are framed, and limited in their generalising force, by a discourse of social memory, and thus a practice of description that resists its own necessary closure; working between known and unknown selves as well as between past and present, he opens up the gaps he describes. Closure of a different kind is produced by those externalising, as well as generalising, accounts of postmodern politics which, by positing (as Grossberg does not) a universal model of mass mediation, have sought to periodise -- on others' behalf -- an ideology/affect split. This is really a way of mapping the difference of "television" onto the

cinematic terms of "spectacle " and "identification" classically defining aestheticised politics. In the process, a pre-postmodern "past" becomes the object of a stabilising description of "the way things used to be" before electronic mediation. Instead of opening a series of gaps, this kind of analysis produces the foreclosure of ideology that mediation is then said, "historically", to have caused.

Thus for Jochen Schulte-Sasse, a "sentimentologic" is now displacing "ideologic" in its ideological role of ensuring socio-cultural reproduction. In "Electronic Media and Cultural Politics in the Reagan Era", he reads the U.S. raid on Libya and the "Hands Across America" mega-event of 1986 as signalling a whole series of drastic shifts: we go from a "linear narration" of human living space, to "synaesthetic fragmentation"; from a subject under the command of a "strong super-ego" ("agonistic, competitive individuals with clearly delimited, ideological identities") to a "narcissistically diffuse" identity under the sway of "the id"; from the "armed" psyche of modern nationalism, its "historical perspective" shaped by localising, time-lagged technologies (rallies, radio, cinema), to a "feelgood", postmodern nationalism fostered by electronic media now able to aestheticise politics "intensely" on a truly massive scale.³⁶

A fusional model of ecstasy is activated here: where, for Grossberg, fissures open across the shifting terrain of a social subjectivity, for Schulte-Sasse the boundaries of an old, hard-edged self are blurred by a surge of indistinctness, in a "paradoxical experience of both identity and dissolution"

(147); immanentist nationalism gives way to the softly circular relationality of mass narcissism. This is a version of an old argument in media studies. Adopting what Philip Hayward calls the "gratingly familiar" assumption that "TV and video are characterized above all by their (meta-textual) 'flow'... [even though] the most basic level of audience research reveals viewing patterns that disrupt this rigidly simplistic characterization",³⁷ Shulte-Sasse projects this "flow" onto another familiar binary grid opposing fragment to structure, fluid to solid, blur to line, dispersiveness to decisiveness, passivity to activity, absorption to commitment -- a grid dependent for its coherence on an elided image/story of asymmetry: sexual difference.

In the context of discussing nationalism, this elision allows Schulte-Sasse to renovate "spectacle" by once again representing television as not-linguistic, but as "visual and acoustical", in its operations (127). This in turn makes it possible to conserve the concept of identification by projecting onto the "mass" an Oedipal narrative of regression and "identity" loss.³⁸ His analysis can then avoid the complication of Althusser's concept of ideology, as well as its feminist uses to theorise what Rey Chow, in Woman and Chinese Modernity, calls "the experience of consumption and reception ... that store of elusive elements that, apart from 'wages' and 'surplus value,' enable people to buy, accept, and enjoy what is available in their culture".³⁹

A lucid or discriminating "sentimental" pleasure will not register for Shulte-Sasse's model of mediation, any more than

the television talk show can figure for his theory of an a-linguistic postmodern mass subjectivity. With so much American experience of television excluded from the study of American national feeling, the prospect of an auratic Australian politician passionately lecturing in economics to a TV audience including at least some appalled but adoring fans watching him in between re-runs of Miami Vice and LA Law (for Shulte-Sasse, emblematic postmodern shows) can only count as eccentric.

I walk on that stage, some performances might be better than others, but they will all be up there trying to stream the economics and the politics together. Out there on the stage doing the Placido Domingo.

Paul Keating to the Canberra Press Club,
7 December 1990.⁴⁰

However it is only in an avoidance of thinking TV language as well as everyday social disjunction (marked in Rey Chow's subtle "apart from") and cultural mixity ("store"), that the myth of mass culture as Woman can sustain its political form as an elegy on the death of Public Man. I think that any theoretical discourse in which a private/public boundary figures as the vanishing locus of an apocalyptic event -- rather than as an unstable object, product and site of social contestation -- is a traumatised discourse on the conceptual impossibility and the historical actuality of

"female" suffrage.⁴¹ Like TV as a private/public medium of the language of personal/political "talk", Woman as citizen makes sense for this discourse only as the blur abolishing the line that historically once "clearly delimited" (in Schulte-Sasse's phrase) "ideological" Public Man from his disenfranchised, "sentimentological" others.

Yet there is also something closed about my criticism here, routinely taking its distance on familiar, if necessary, feminist grounds. Schulte-Sasse's objects differ from mine: he theorises the enabling conditions of singular massifying events (prime-time bombing-raids, mass-participation spectacles), while I am concerned with an everyday, low-level process that can organise a mediated partisan feeling. Moreover, as part of my experience of that process I find myself consuming much self-reflexive Australian media discourse that, in its gendering of debate about communication and citizen-subjectivity, does not differ greatly in its basic assumptions from Schulte-Sasse's. This raises the question of how cultural and political differentiation may work through the apparently general framework of a discourse of sexual sameness.

Keating certainly provoked gender trouble, but sex was rarely at stake. On the one hand, he was famous for displays of what Gloria-Jean Masciarotte calls "muscular orality" or "voiced muscle".⁴² Formal parliamentary boxing aside, he often pulverised media decorum codes with blasts of well-timed misplaced humour: his sensationally vulgar response on Sydney breakfast radio in 1990 to being elected (for the second time)

"the sexiest man in Australia" was celebrated with much hilarity on the Midday Show by a gift of libidinally restorative black silk pyjamas -- while "time to put the cue on the rack" passed into the lexicon of phrases used by journalists to add vernacularity to their prose.⁴³ In the more specialised media context of an address to the National Press Club, Keating himself gave the voice/muscle theme an operative frame of reference in his notorious "Placido Domingo speech". This throwaway self-description inspired the media to repeat for months that Keating could turn economics into high art and popularise the outcome. But the joke was widely read as pugilistic. Since the speech also argued that Australia has never had "a real leader", reporters claimed that Keating saw himself as the man of real talent performing in the shadow of a more popular, but less able, Pavarotti. This was a projection of media desires and perceptions; Keating had merely described his way of promoting economic policy as "doing the Placido Domingo". However, he was widely quoted as having declared himself "the Placido Domingo of politics". From this moment, the Hawke-Keating partnership publicly began to disintegrate.

On the other hand, Keating's eroticised status as an object of media desire ("he seduces us all from time to time, just as he seduces the government and he seduces the Caucus and he seduces the Cabinet")⁴⁴ entailed an explicit feminisation, not because "he" is seductive -- the culture of mateship admits this as an unmarked characteristic -- but because he could seduce with the fluency of a speech (to

journalist Peter Hartcher, a "siren-song"), which was also widely mistrusted ("so beguiling that, like Ulysses' seamen, [journalists] deliberately close their ears").⁴⁵ He was, in short, a recognised rhetorician, and rhetoric can be construed not only as a "feminine" orality (Voice) but as intellectually feminising ("plainly short on matter"). Hartcher even called on Edward de Bono to endorse his suspicion of Keating as posing that special threat to Australian masculinity, an "intelligence trap"; "the more intelligent you are, the more readily you can argue any proposition that you happen upon".

This is exactly the accusation to which journalists themselves are always subject. No matter how loudly they may invoke the greater reality and truth of hard-nosed practical action, their own practice of voice, word and image must remain, by these criteria, hopelessly rhetorical. In this context, Derek Parker's use of the term "courtesans" to name a special erotic-economic complicity between the government and the press gallery was no casually sexist gesture, but a theory of a mode of governance, "pornocracy", dominated by the corrupting wiles of female rhetoricians: "They thrive on rumour, gossip, and the labyrinthine intrigues of the party system. To the Courtesans, the game is all".⁴⁶ Perhaps more significant, then, than the charges of femininity and intellectuality routinely exchanged as insults by powerful men is the shared anxiety, and the longing this banter articulates for a certain something -- ideology, solid "matter", a responsible use of power -- deemed to be missing from the mediated public sphere (sentimental, rhetorical, formalist)

that these same men, effectively, dominate.

In this context, Keating's narrowness was emblematic of a "something" that aroused intense ambivalence. One "How to Pick The Real Paul Keating" cartoon projected the structure of media obsession with Keating as an impossible object (perfectly benevolent, totally destructive) in terms of a masculine ambivocality. "Voice" in this structure is not opposed to language, writing or law, but internally divided. Two identical visual images are verbally differentiated as "The Real Paul!" (Prime Ministerial pretender), and "The Evil Twin!" (cause of the recession); The Evil Twin has a "tongue foul enough to make a wharfie blush" while The Real Paul has a "lovely silky baritone, sings like Sinatra only without his threatening and elitist talent".⁴⁷ Like "foul tongue", "language" is an old-fashioned euphemism for swearing: between language and music, profanity and sanctity, muscularity and silk, foul tongue and singing, a problem of identity circulates in the oscillation of love and hostility that constitutes ambivalence -- and thus the oscillation that constitutes the question.

A psychoanalytic reading could no doubt further explain the process whereby journalists developed a "Keating thing" as a symptom of their own enduringly ambivalent relations to political power and to sentimental/rhetorical performance.⁴⁸ Consumer ecstasy doesn't quite work the same way, involving as it does a basic failure of hostility (thus suspending identity as problem), and nor does comic criticism: the cartoon solves the problem by implying a third term, a Really Evil Paul

Keating who obviously orchestrates ("without talent"), from another position, the production of his voices and images.

For the "matter" melancholics of the media, this solution is itself the problem posed by a political leader who "has it" by openly having only the form of having it. In a media economy (the logic goes), a self-promoting image man with the rhetorical force and the legitimacy to promote himself as a self-made man, with real old-fashioned policies, may actually offer a leadership-effect, and so generate Being by Seeming. An anxious dream (recurrent in the history of realism, insistent in the "Keating for PM" editorials that appeared with greater frequency as the recession of the late 1980s intensified) takes shape as a hope that nostalgia for political substance may be overcome by a cynical belief in the Image. In such a moment, "Keating" became the name of a utopian discourse in which journalists imagined an ideal "real" political power to be formed in the image of their real "rhetorical" power.⁴⁹

For sheer entertainment value, Paul Keating was the best treasurer we've had for years. By his panache and style, Keating made economics sexy. A verbal spell-binder, his ability to coin a phrase to describe problems afflicting the economy would leave lesser mortals groping for words. Keating has popularized economics -- we now breathe economics, speak economics and feast on economics. The monthly balance of payments figures are received like the

latest cricket score. From the shop-floor to the dance-floor, everyone is squawking about micro-economic reform.

Alex Millmow⁵⁰

Yet cynicism is generally held to characterise now the space of national politics. There is nothing distinctive about it: cynicism is rather taken to be a social norm ("the common coin of politics everywhere")⁵¹ against which any ecstatic response may now be defined as aberrant. Thus Slavoj Zizek, writing from experience of a Communist regime, endorses Peter Sloterdijk's claim that "the cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less insists upon the mask".⁵² No ecstatic fusion or crisis can occur across this distance: cynicism is merely confronted from the other side by kynicism, a "popular, plebeian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm". As a pragmatic, ad hominem procedure, kynicism "subverts the official proposition by confronting it with the situation of its enunciation" -- for example, by exposing the personal gain that a politician who preaches the duty of sacrifice is making "from the sacrifice of others".

"Insisting upon the mask" is a good description of many of the rituals of Australian politics. But Sloterdijk's cynicism, with its spatialised opposition of "socially real" versus semiotic functions, is too neat a concept for thinking the messy relations between masks and other realities in a

pragmatic media democracy where kynical techniques (exposé narratives, satire, scandalisation of the political process, aura-enhancing profiles, merciless analysis of the personal profit motive) are always already part of the media production of "official" political culture. For example, Bob Hawke was often called "the great communicator". The allusion to Reagan was kynical (Hawke has a grating voice, Hawke had delusions of grandeur) but also translative. Hawke's "image" as an immensely popular leader was neither visual nor vocal but tactile, his medium "the common touch": he visited schools and shopping malls, "pressed the flesh" in retirement homes, went touring to feel The People; an idealisation of Hawke as embodying a distinctively Australian version of "great communication" was thus, along with his delusiveness, asserted, enhanced -- and communicated.

In a similar way, Alex Millmow's breezy review of Keating's performance as Treasurer has a certain kynical panache, prefacing as it does a judgment that "his constituency, the ordinary folk, paid the price for this economic experiment with ... their jobs". It also has something of that capacity for making an "absolutely real and totally ironic" investment of taste in an image that Grossberg calls, not cynicism or kynicism, but "authentic inauthenticity" (43, 61). However Millmow's is a subcultural-professional, rather than a national-popular, "everyone": easily taking its critical distance ("sheer entertainment") from Keating's image, it claims no distance from the breathing/speaking/feasting/squawking "we" that is animated by

his speech. This is a real and ironic investment in a use of language, not an image or a mask. It produces identification ("we") not with Keating as specular image (he is reviewed as a speaking subject, indeed, a cultural practitioner), nor with an immanent communal identity or a diffuse collective narcissism, but with the power of an enunciative practice that can ("popularizing", "spell-binding", "sexy") create a specialised "we" that is openly engaged, not in aestheticising politics (a horizon taken as given), but in eroticising economics.

Here, there is nothing to be revealed about the enunciative situation of "official" economic discourse, since the object of "everyone's" desire is to be in a situation to have the power and panache to talk like Keating. This suggests circumstances in which affect and ideology may be, for that limited "everyone", powerfully, if momentarily, convergent. So, too, does the appearance of a "showbiz" profile of Keating by an economics lecturer and a former Treasury officer in a magazine, Australian Left Review, that was once a Communist Party of Australia publication and still included former communists among its editors. While technically mediated, these circumstances are not those of an ecstasy of communication in which, as Baudrillard would have it, "we have passed alive into the models".⁵³ They are those, densely historical, of a social moment in which a passion for using a particular descriptive model could pass "from the shop-floor to the dance-floor", and from the bureaucracy to the academy to the Labor Party to the old Far Left to the gentle reader,

without, in fact, abolishing differences between existing social spaces -- for Millmow, the factory/nightclub opposition is in fact ironically savoured -- while overriding old political codes assigning specific kinds of speech as proper to particular places.

The differences between working and dancing, national accounting and sport, are not threatened by "sexy" economics, any more than is the system of social discriminations excluding from the category "everyone" precisely anyone unable to switch smoothly between practices and positions. What does collapse⁴ in this new petit-bourgeois scenario of a lateral social mobility is any expectation of manifest difference between unionist, corporate, parliamentary, "revolutionary" and street-chic ways of describing the social world. On this reading, people under the spell of Millmow's Keating do not "pass alive" into an ecstasy of economics. We consume (breathe/feast) and we parrot (speak/squawk)⁵⁴ a strictly utopian common language that reproduces sameness across a range of social sites, not by facilitating "communication" between formally differentiated social positions or technical relay points, but, on the contrary, by enabling a sense of communion with (the discourse of) the other.

An ability to spread across customary social borders is more often associated with fashion than with the dismal science and, as recession deepened in the early 1990s, some began to distance themselves from "80s economic fashions". But as it circulated through once-antagonistic spaces of Australian political life, the dream of an economic common

language had more to do with mysticism than with cynicism or fashion. Millmow does not exaggerate the bodily effect that being, as it were, liberated into a world of infinitely free marketeering could have on those Keating fans who, twenty, even ten, years earlier, were thundering from shop-floor to dance-floor about class struggle, social justice and bourgeois ideology. I saw men on television (trade-union stars, Cabinet Ministers, left-wing think-tank advisers) visibly hystericised by talking economics: eyes would glaze, shoulders hunch, lips tremble in a sensual paroxysm of "letting the market decide", "making the hard decisions", "levelling the playing field", "reforming management practices", "improving productivity" and "changing the workplace culture". Minds melted, rather than closed: those who queried the wisdom of floating the exchange rate, deregulating the banks, or phasing out industry protection were less ignored than washed away in the intoxicating rush of "living in a competitive world" and "joining the global economy".

Critics were hystericised, too. Proponents may say calmly that economic rationalism is just a belief that "markets usually allocate productive resources better than planners"⁵⁵ -- on the surface, a simple post-Keynesian proposition. But for all of its modern history, Australia has been governed by the opposite assumption: "labourism", a social contract upheld in various forms since 1904, exchanged trade protection and currency controls for a state-regulated wage fixing system and compulsory arbitration; as a capital/labor deal for redistributing national income

primarily between white men, labourism was sustained by a massive immigration policy legitimated and administered on racist principles until the 1960s, but by versions of multiculturalism thereafter. So the process of internationalising the Australian economy has had a devastating intellectual (affective, ideological) as well as social effect. As the political alignments of a century slowly begin to shatter, even those "new social movements" most critical of the history and practices of labourism -- feminism, anti-racism, environmentalism -- find themselves recast by its decline as "entrenched" and "vested" interests now obstructing radical change.

Poorly grasped in its implications at the beginning of the 1980s, the "rationalist revolution" -- in fact, an ideological program to justify the effects in the West of the global restructuring of capitalism -- often figured in the Australian media as a mix of "Thatcherite" and "Reaganite" slogans confusingly sponsored by Labor. Invasive metaphors soon demonised the new philosophy as an all-devouring alien, formally echoing old war-time caricatures of the German-Japanese menace, not to mention the "Yellow Peril". One cartoon depicted a snake-oil apocalypse ("Once upon a time, people used to talk about issues and have fun. Then someone invented the economy. ... the economy grew and grew! It took over everything and no-one could escape!) in which a horrible, noisy fluid ("HEY WHAT'S THIS BORING BLACK STUFF!") swamps all human discourse ("I... I DON'T KNOW! BUT .. MY BRAIN! IT'S ... IT'S ROTTING!") with its gurgling deficit-speak.⁵⁶ On the

academic side, the sociologist Michael Pusey began a Habermasian study of Economic Rationalism in Canberra by defining his object as a "locust strike" delivering our social democracy into "the unfriendly grip of ideas ... from Britain and the United States -- the two great 'stateless societies'".⁵⁷ A senior vice-president of Kemper Financial Services (Chicago) could then urbanely invoke in support of rationalist policies "the intellectual upheaval now occurring in Third World political centres such as Mexico City, New Delhi, Jakarta and Buenos Aires",⁵⁸

For those unwilling to resort to a paranoid national rhetoric, Keating made economics sexy by acting as a great describer in Susan Stewart's sense. Keating was eloquent, not hysterical or paranoid, and lyrical, not communicative, in promoting economic reform. He used TV to outline a vision of a future "time and space" of plenitude (ever-receding from the lived experience of most Australians) that would follow from a bargained, consensual process of deregulation, contrasting it graphically with the "banana republic" purgatory awaiting a stagnant, closed economy -- and with the cruel, truly "Thatcherite" revolution promised by the right-wing Opposition parties. An interest in Keating's style (language, voice) is thus an interest in a particular kind of closure, one that may be called "ideological" because it does involve belief as well as affect. Any Treasurer can promise that economic discourse has a magic power of "closing the gap that separates language from the experience it encodes",⁵⁹ in order to satisfy longing; such closure is an aim of policy. However the "gap"

between Keating's hypercoded Labor vocality and his managerial language paradoxically also promised that his discourse could magically narrow the gulf between the social values (egalitarian, solidary, compassionate) mythically upheld as national ideals in white working-class popular memory, and realpolitik of economic rationalism -- elitist, divisive, competitive.

III

Dream and norm are but twin aspects of the neoconservative vision. The abstract models elaborated by the Chicago School propose a pragmatic, positive political project designed for the aftermath of the present economic crisis. However these models also reveal neoconservative economics to be truly utopian: like all utopias, it is first and foremost haunted by lack, ceaselessly filling within economics and by means of economics what it perceives to be lacking.

Annie L. Cot⁶⁰

Donald Horne has suggested that the peculiarly intense imaginary of truth that Australians call economic rationalism might better be described as economic fundamentalism. It is not just that variable mix of policies, adopted during the 1980s, in diverse forms, by all the "English-speaking" economies, that aims to reduce the regulatory powers and the

social responsibilities of government while increasing the state's efficiency in further distributing wealth to the wealthy, and poverty to the poor.⁶¹ Nor is it just a belief that neoclassical economics offers the most, perhaps now the only, rational guide to state action in democratic countries today. Economic fundamentalism also involves an inversion whereby, as Pusey puts it, "society [is] recast as the object of politics (rather than, at least in the norms of the earlier discourses, as the subject of politics)" and thus as "some sort of stubbornly resisting sludge" -- even as "an idealized opponent of 'the economy'" (10, my emphases).

For Pusey, this inversion redefines "culture" as merely the malleable, consumable environment of economic action (18) -- a move familiar to students of the tourist/leisure/lifestyle/art-and-architecture complex that transformed the social landscape of our cities and towns in the boom of the 1980s. But both Horne and Pusey note the back-from-the-dead effect that this new economic determinism has also had in Australia on what Horne bluntly calls "Stalinism", and Pusey "orthodox Marxism". Indeed, Pusey claims that a market determinism politically projected as an enduring administrative system is capable of reaching an accommodation "with almost anyone ... except liberals" -- who persist in claiming primacy for concepts of community and civil society, and whom the traditional Left and the Right have always agreed to despise. (194)

This argument helps to make sense of the panache with which some of yesterday's Althusserians could become

econocrats cavorting to the sound of Keating-speak on Alex Millmow's dance-floor. The fundamentalist inversion allows for a moment in which a professional subject of politics -- a loose alliance of bureaucrats, advisers, managers, experts and, more fantasmally, journalists and policy theorists identifying with the forms of power exercised by these -- can project as its proper object of action, not "society" in general, but particular cultures in need of "restructuring" for their own economic good. Vintage forms of vanguardism find a new mission in this; there is no need for socialist or modernist nostalgia when the new avant-garde can trade the cell for the committee, write reports instead of manifestoes, and leave the garret for the corridors of power.

As well as highlighting the anti-democratic implications of a philosophy that treats society as a by-product ("sludge") of market forces tempered only by the actions of an elite caste of experts, the term "economic fundamentalism" is useful for sidestepping that space of media polemic in which opposition is disqualified as "economically irrational". In doing so, it allows us to see this space as one in which a duel of "reason" with "emotion" is being staged with quite desperate intensity. It is a curious conflict, not because "emotion" is here, like "theory", a sign exchanged between adversaries equally claiming rationality, but because this exchange so explicitly occurs between moderate ("pragmatic") and pure ("principled") exponents of the same belief that the market is a rational agent. Perhaps because there is no pretence at confronting a significantly different other, the

debate has a desperate intensity in that the "rationalist" move on both sides is no longer to impose as universal a particular mode of logic, but rather to displace the argumentative procedures of reasoning with a furious rhetoric of Reason -- as though the very act of pronouncing the other irrational can magically install the speaker as the guaranteed subject of an intrinsically rational discourse (and thus as a master of "market logic").

In this spirit, a serious journalist such as Peter Robinson can assert in a wonderful othering move that critics of economic rationalism must logically favour irrationalism but, "since no-one is prepared to admit to this openly", will deviously "cloak" their irrationality in "economic sentimentalism".⁶² By portraying the unemployed as "innocent victims" of "faceless bureaucrats with economics degrees", these unscrupulous "irrational sentimentalists" will then cruelly "assault ... the emotions through a ruthless appeal to pity and patriotism". Robinson is primarily referring here to people in public life (including Labor politicians) who wanted to respond with old-fashioned "'pump-priming' schemes, 'job-creating' policies, and 'industry assistance' hand-outs" to the severe recession which, by 1991, had overtaken those economies -- Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Britain -- in which the elements of economic rationalism most dominated policy thinking and administrative practice throughout the 1980s. Robinson describes such responses as a "cruel hoax", and as "ruthless" in their sentimentality, because he does not believe they can work.

But the strident illogic of his own polemic makes it painfully clear that Robinson himself has no idea of what will work. When he goes on to proclaim "the truth of the matter", that industry policy cannot be "turned on and off like a tap", truth is a revelation that our position in the global economy is now hopelessly mired in lack: on the one hand, Australia "lacks the economic power" to demand that other nations turn their assistance tap off in the interests in free trade; on the other, it "lacks the cohesive authoritarian [cultural] tradition" to which Robinson imputes the success of those Asian economies that have thrived on "government interventionism at home". In the end, Robinson's rationalism is fundamentally a faith, not in Man or in the powers of human reason, but in the Law of a jealous God: "ultimately", he concludes, "economic reality cannot be mocked any more than cultural reality can".⁶³

Of course, this authoritarian fatalism is most sensibly ascribed to a realistic recognition that no deeply indebted trading nation, having handed control of its currency's value to the global financial markets, can hope to solve its trouble by following the will of its people or the whim of its politicians in an "immanentist" isolation. At this level, by affirming economic Reason as the transcendent principle that, as John Forbes puts it, "no philosopher could argue with", Robinson merely expresses -- using clichés culled from the debris of a culture's perhaps once true belief in Reason, God and Man -- his impatience with those who do not see, or cannot afford to admit, that the powers of at least this nation state

really have been much curtailed. What interests me, however, is the intensity with which such a self-styled "rational" discourse will -- when confronting the limits of its own powers in the form of the other's lack -- turn doctrinaire rather than practical in the very moment when it says it knows that pragmatism requires, not universal norms, but a relational thinking of difference.

Robinson is a moderate exponent of economic rationalism because his discourse does say this: like his daring admission that Australia is not the United States or Japan, his reference to "cultural reality" would qualify in turn as "irrational" and "sentimental" for those theorists who dream that Australians can and should abandon their sludgy political culture in order to model a new society on (as one of them puts it) "ordo liberalism in post-war Germany and [sic] the commitment to the neo-Confucian order in East Asia".⁶⁴ For strict fundamentalists, the solution is not to review what Robinson concedes to be "innumerable mistakes made in the name of economic rationalism", but to replace our entire political system with "a simple order" based on rationalist principles even more relentlessly applied.⁶⁵ Logically, a discourse of moderation should confront such fierce utopians, as well "sentimentalists", with the conditions of a rational compromise between economy and culture. Instead, in a move characteristic of much contemporary financial journalism, Robinson turns from berating the nostalgia animating others to exalting inactivity in the melancholy name of a chastened acceptance of Fate.

A rational person, according to the philosopher Bertrand Russell, is one who gives any proposition that degree of weight which the evidence for the proposition warrants. In common parlance, we describe such a person as clear-thinking, of sound judgment. Apply such judgment to matters economic and you have your "economic rationalist".

G.O. Gutman⁶⁶

Watching this bizarre debate spill over from the financial press into TV news, reshaped as a conflict of principle between the major political parties (Labor, "moderate", Liberal, "pure"), it seemed by 1991 that the whole opinion-industry in Australia had been taken over by demented white men very publicly losing their marbles. Given the agony and uncertainty of "the worst recession in 60 years" combined with world political change, this effect was unsurprising; few men of power in our culture have much experience of exercising political agency from a disempowered position, and the madness of those who wanted to Confucianize Australia because "Thatcherization" had failed was matched by others who, in facing evidence of a disaster created by big business, banks, Keating's use of monetary policy, global trade war and some strangely hot dry weather, judged responsible for the nation's woes environmentalists, unions and Aboriginal people irrationally impeding development.⁶⁷

More than a decade ago, however, Annie Cot suggested, in a fascinating argument with the utopianism of Chicago School

economics, that the academic project so pervasively influential as a component of the transnational "rationalist revolution" has itself always been driven by a desire to evade the real social disorder of the crisis of capitalist restructuring that it claimed to overcome -- and that an analysis of fantasy is needed in order to follow its reasoning. Cot carefully restricts the object of her analysis. Where Pusey risks paranoia in tracing a massive historical movement that embraces the 1975 Trilateral Commission report (The Crisis of Democracy)⁶⁸ "postmodernism" in social theory (Niklas Luhmann's systems logic), and the training of a generation of administrators in the "technically-oriented neoclassical economics curriculum that swept through the economics departments of Australian universities from about 1947" (6), Cot focuses on the work of Gary Becker in order to examine the disciplinary rhetoric of a single body of theory. Analysing the invasive logic of its self-representation as a movement to colonise, across the boundaries of economics, an "outside-itself" which is thus denied its difference, she associates this movement of intellectual ekstasis with a theoretical politics of "despotism".⁶⁹

Justifying her spatial metaphors historically in relation to the constitution of modern "standard" economics as a discipline excluding the family (scene of love, not money) from its field, Cot argues that with the emergence in the 1970s of a theory of human capital promising to provide, as Becker puts it, a "unified framework for all behaviour involving scarce resources", economics begins to slip by its

own criteria "outside its terrain". Thus "delocalised", economics becomes a u-topian totalising discourse, which affirms "the universality of its reading of human behaviour by transgressing the market boundaries of economics", and a totalitarian discourse which declares itself "the sole bearer of the single, universal norm of all forms of social structure, market or nonmarket, past or present, private or public" (293-94).

With this expansive movement, economics seems to "regress to its original meaning; oikonomia, the economics of the household" (296). In fact, an inversion is effected, analogically, whereby the family is seen as the reflection of a market society; the result projected in political terms is a "fantasy of an entire society transformed into a factory" (305). Arguing that such an "expanded" market economics must paradoxically negate the neoclassical concept of the market, Cot suggests that a theoretical figure produced by the inversion of economics and oikonomia then functions to explain this paradox, as well as to satisfy a "paternalistic nostalgia" induced by the crisis of the welfare state -- the "despotic 'head of the family'". The despot reconciles love and money: defined, in theory, neither by sex or age, the neoconservative head of the family is "that member, if there is one, who transfers general purchasing power to all other members because he cares about their welfare" (299, my emphasis). In this fantasy of "pure power" -- fantasmal, because it denies the horizontal power relations that constitute the family, analogical, because it must disavow

difference in order to function -- the "natural order of the market" converges with "the genetic order of nature" in the neo-Darwinian household.⁷⁰

However the "rarely acknowledged" stake of this normalising movement (and the objective, for neoconservatives, of restructuring, including of the marketing of products) is no longer the domination of space that preoccupied earlier liberal utopians, but the conquest of (nonmarket) time: "where Rousseau and Bentham dreamed of panoptic transparency, the Chicago School advocates a panchronic transparency of human activities" (304).⁷¹ It is in the context of this shift that the ecstatic disciplinary move can be understood as an evasive response to crisis. Cot does not simply argue that neoconservative economics tries to subject all social categories to the principles of market regulation, although this was a feature of the economic mysticism by which policy rhetoric was "carried away" in the 1980s.⁷² Her major point is that the boundary between market and non-market spaces is traditionally conceptualised by the Left as the dividing line between "necessity and freedom", and thus as "the prerequisite of a nonmarket and pluralistic socialization". The new Right's effort to annihilate any type of boundary to the market implies, however, that both spaces can "fuse in a generalized economic tabulation where human time would be the primary element" (307, my emphasis). In this utopia, the market "shines forth", as Baudrillard puts it, in the "pure and empty" form of an eternal, as well as infinite, economic Sublime.

Cot's is a European reading of an American intellectual project and could, in its formalist aspect, easily be accused of ignoring the diverse institutional contexts and real economic conditions in which neoconservative economics came to influence the political agenda in so many countries after the first "oil shock" of the early 1970s. As Pusey points out, while "the rhetoric may be the same everywhere, the structural context is not": in Australia, the enthusiasm for it on both sides of politics after 1975 needs to be understood in terms of the historical crisis of a particular form of protectionism with no equivalent in the United States or Britain, and which was "seen as leading the nation down the Argentine road".⁷³

Yet Pusey's institutional study confirms Cot's premise that the problem posed to pluralistic democracy by economic rationalism as a "norm-setting language" (109) is one of "redefining the legitimate bounds of economic behaviour" (13). Pusey locates the real-political threat of this language precisely in its capacity to substitute a purely "formal" rationalism for the practical rationality preserved by previous philosophies of public administration under capitalism. In this respect, the conclusion of his empirically grounded sociology is not only compatible with Cot's analysis of economic representation, but even more depressing in its vision of the consequences. At that "sublime" moment when the limit-less logic of an economic formalism is unopposed in policy discourse and administrative practice, for Pusey it in fact turns catastrophic: "in its constructions of time and in its incapacity to read or 'obey' the demands of the external

environment" (here physical as well as cultural), "economic rationalism as a model for action is the very opposite of an adaptive system". It "resembles instead a model of the self-destroying system" (21).⁷⁴

Taken together, these analyses help to explain a public debate in which -- at the very moment when the evidence would seem to cast doubt on the adequacy of economic fundamentalism as a guide to action -- the melancholy exponents of paralysis (the "do nothing" theory of government) compete for honours in "clear thinking" with infantile megalomaniacs identifying with the force of a Market that could, unimpeded, do everything. Pusey ascribes the investment of a generation of intellectuals in perpetuating such discourse to "a trained incapacity to learn from later experience" (6) related to a privileged class background as well as a training in neoclassical economics. However Cot's analysis of rhetorical forms can better explain how speaking subjects may come to identify, so passionately and inadaptably, with the discursive process of one particular training. When pure rationalists call for a "leaner" public sector to replace the "welfare state" in Australia -- even though by 1988 Australia already had the lowest reported welfare spending of all OECD nations, and smaller government than any but Japan and Turkey⁷⁵ -- their insatiability supports Cot's claim that an analysis of fantasy is needed to understand a program which, in its ecstatic determination to "fill all gaps between the economic and the noneconomic", in that same movement recoils from the complexity of any "'real', localised market" (304).

Her account is certainly useful as an allegory of the way in which a figure personifying an ecstatic economic discourse can appeal to media intellectuals who value the power of speech. Despite its many differences from Chicago School utopianism, the economics made sexy by Keating no doubt owed some of its resonance of "pure power" to the movement analysed by Annie Cot. In the 1980s, political debate in Australia collapsed almost entirely into a discourse of economic management:⁷⁶ not only did the difference between the parties reduce, for a time, to one of management styles, but activists on issues once considered "social" and intrinsically important (from racism, the status of women, and human rights, to public education and the arts) had to reconstruct their objects and their practices in order to prove them "not uneconomic". A social-factory thematics became ubiquitous, like the dream of controlling time: by 1990, "productivity" was a value to be extracted in any activity from manufacturing to aerobics to writing poetry. While the head of the family was not invoked as a legitimising figure, a craving for something quite like "the despot's tenderness" infused coverage of the leadership's efforts to increase disposable household income while cutting workers' wages: whether the Treasurer really cared about ordinary Australians as he chopped their pay became as contentious as the exact percentages of love exchanged on a monthly basis in Hawke's "affair" with the people.

But there was also a movement of charisma running back the other way. The "Keating" made sexy by economics owed much of his resonance to an inversion of the promise of a

neoconservative utopia: in place of a society transformed into a "diffuse factory", Labor could offer a fantasy of Australia transformed into One Big Union. With its emphasis on bargaining, consensus and a training of constituents (using radio and television) in meta-discourses legitimating the "hard decisions" which affect them, neo-corporatism does differ in crucial respects from neoconservatism. The Hawke-Keating program was underpinned by an Accord renegotiated six times with the union movement -- an anathema to "true" rationalists, aiming as it did not only to secure stability for the government in the present but to strengthen the labor movement against the day when "real" neoconservatives came to power. For this reason, an ecstatic/despotic economics could lend its religious aura all the more powerfully to those very figures who wanted to enhance their necessary practice of responsible economic management -- but also to limit the social destructiveness of neoconservative logic.

For this reason, too, Paul Keating was a reversible, and not a contradictory, political sign. Not only could he pose with perfect consistency as the voice of continuity and the agent of rupture, but, when his achievements as Treasurer appeared to be self-destructing, he could switch smoothly from playing the public face of the only "real" rationalist revolution Australia had then experienced into his other role as the only Man of Action capable of saving our social democracy from rationalist revolutionaries -- and of talking the markets into letting him do it.¹⁷ When the Caucus made Keating Prime Minister at the end of 1991, the man they chose

to lead the nation in its hour of need was not only the Evil Twin who had invoked the Law of economic reality in 1990 in order to justify on television "the recession we had to have". They also elected the Keating who had, just a few months earlier, convulsed the media with laughter at the Opposition Leader, John Hewson, for promising Australians that a "whole other world" would follow from his economic reforms. Hewson, said Keating (reciting in Parliament the opening stanzas of a popular song), must be "getting his economics from Sam Cooke":

Don't know much about history

Don't know much biology ...

But I do know that I love you

And I know that if you loved me too

What a wonderful world this would be

"Marie" and "PJ" serenading Keating,

Bert Newton Show, November 1989.

I read John Forbes' poem as an analysis of how this mediated double movement -- convergent, not diffusive, more fervid than cynical or cool -- can work for a willing, wanting subject. "Watching the Treasurer" is a marvellous text about television watched intensely and closely, about seeing "the words come out": a text that creates, in its slide toward "that utopia" of identity and belief, relations so intricate between speaking and seeing and hearing that for me it describes the movement involved in a desire to describe -- and in my desire to believe Paul Keating's descriptions. If hardly

anyone watches television like intellectuals who analyse television (journalists and political commentators as well as poets and cultural critics), then the poem is a study of a particular way of watching.

"Watching the Treasurer" has only two sentences. The first is a clear, short statement of desire to believe by a definite "I" addressing everyone, no-one, itself (and so perhaps the institution of literature). This comfortably social subject contemplates truth ("lies") and beauty -- historic food for poetry -- in the form of a display that is ambiguously sacred, like the Communion feast, and domestic, like working-class "tea". The scene is homely, cosy, yet also ceremonial: "I" is desirous, like a dinner guest, but also passive, like a couch potato; "the past" hospitably does the spreading out of lies to be admired and consumed. Then something happens across the space between "feast" and "Television":

I want to believe the beautiful lies
the past spreads out like a feast.

Television is full of them & inside
their beauty you can act:

It's like an eye moving, naturally, from table to TV set (as anyone's eye might do at dinner), but also like a camera making commonplace moves when tracking around a lounge room. My own desire to eat lies is activated, turned into a greed

for (words about) the image, and from "inside their beauty you can act" I have the most wonderful, powerful sense of zooming, and being sucked, into the television -- greedy to be consumed by it, yes, but gently, not voraciously, to end up "bathed", to be precise, in that "milky white fluorescent glow". But during the long second sentence, there is a complicated splitting of the terms of the opening scene:

Paul Keating's

bottom lip trembles then recovers,
like the exchange rate under pressure

buoyed up as the words come out --
elegant apostle of necessity, meaning

what rich Americans want, his world is
like a poem, completing that utopia

no philosopher could argue with, where

"I" vanishes, never to reappear, in a series of little displacements between "television", "Paul Keating", and two enunciatively blurry "you"s. "I" becomes "you" ambiguously as you, me, Paul Keating, one, everybody ("you can act"), and also, more strongly in the second instance ("what your words describe you know exists"), an other "I" somewhere in an elsewhere of the text. But through all the intricate doubling

that formally structures the poem (I:you/you; I/television: you/Paul Keating; I want/rich Americans want:his world/your words), there is, in the movement toward "that utopia", an increasing pressure of convergence between the visual ("beauty" to "bottom lip" to "elegant"), the oral ("feast" to "lip" to "milky") and the verbal ("lies" to "exchange rate" to "words come out") towards a scene of fullness ("feast" to "full" to "completing" to "glow") and fluidity ("lip" to "buoyed up" to "bathed" to "milky ... fluorescent").

There is also a story here -- a little narrative of ekstasis. Its three main phases are divided by the two ampersands: an initial setting in place (down to "& inside their beauty"), an image on screen as transition (to "& what your words describe"), and then closure in "that" utopian space of "glow", syntactically hooked to the rest of the text by the single word, "completing", where:

what seems, is & what your words describe
you know exists, under a few millimetres
of invisible cosmetic, bathed

in a milky white fluorescent glow.

Each phase has its own modality: desire ("I want to believe"); empowerment ("you can act"); knowledge ("you know exists"). So the mediating phase of empowerment, at once a portrait of a "bottom lip" and a mise en scene of speaking, acts as a kind of passage, an event between two scenes: one on "this" side of

retrospect, both "the past" and the scene of consumption. There is a crazy infantilism somewhere here, a thumb-sucking, megalomaniac dream of power and satisfaction ("you can act") that connects in some delicious way to Keating's "bottom lip". But is Keating like child, or mother? Once inside the beauty of television's lies, "You" and "Paul Keating" work, syntactically, as doubles of each other ("you can act: Paul Keating's bottom lip trembles..."), but he looms larger pretty quickly: he starts talking up the exchange rate as a delegated instance of "your" power, but as he does so "you" is carried away by the buoyancy of his words.

It doesn't last. Julia Kristeva once wrote that "the symbolic order is assured as soon as there are images which secure unfailing belief, for belief is in itself the image: both arise out of the same procedures and through the same terms: memory, sight and love".⁸⁰ Perhaps the pull towards presence is so strong for me in the middle of the poem because, in the end, unfailing belief is not secured in the Keating image. "Watching the Treasurer" isn't Videodrome, with Keating as Debbie Harry on the other side demanding "Come to Momma". Here "you" does bump up against something; not a screen but a layer of distance, "a few millimetres of invisible cosmetic", between wanting and believing, describing and being, and what you see is in the end all you get: to push the fantasy of being "sucked in" any further is like pushing your nose against the TV screen to get an eyeful of fluorescence.

If there is no true subject in "that utopia" at the end,

there is no more ecstasy either. What visibly "exists" there, "bathed" in glow, is merely a "what" -- a relative pronoun, a bit of language, that relation "your words describe". Writing, rather than memory, sight or love (and a desire for control, not belief) predominates in this poem: even the ampersands buttoning the narrative in place are vivid signs of Modern Poetry at its most scrupulously written. A history of writing also helps to define the problem of "what your words describe", since, from the beginning, Forbes' feast of lies is literary: "Australian history", claimed Mark Twain in a famous fantasy proposition, "is ... like the most beautiful lies ... but they are all true, they all happened".⁸¹

Because of this formal institutional framing, his domestic experience of watching the Treasurer intensely is not universalised by Forbes as representative of the power of "television". This poem is not an allegory of postmodern nationalism or of the psychology of a leadership-cult, and it does not suggest that electronic media can colonise "our" sources of identity; in another Forbes poem, "Baby", the language of television is tenderly adult, not phallic-maternal, and companionly rather than mesmerising ("you think how beautiful she is & the soft TV agrees" [79]). What "Watching the Treasurer" does do, I think, is tell a story about someone using television as a way of becoming "involved", in Michelle Rosaldo's sense, in a "social world". This is not a story of emotional manipulation and involuntary memory, but the story of a critical question. Beginning from a personal longing ("I want to believe"), the changing subject

of the poem passes through a moment of interpretive delirium envisaging total control of the image ("you can act") only to arrive, on that fantasy's other side, at a problem: if Paul Keating's world is "like a poem", then what can a poem be like? How do you argue with utopia? how can you act inside the beauty of a lie? -- if not as Keating does, and as a poem (like this poem) can?

It would then be true to say that the poem "acts" by matching the Treasurer's performance with one of its own, although this literary-critical truth is probably a beautiful lie that "I" would only like to believe. For me, the critical power of John Forbes' writing about television culture has more to do with the way that a formal poetic "I" in his texts often struggles to articulate something which that vernacular, screen-wise "you" of his already quite casually knows. This struggle is not, I think, to reconcile a high art/media antagonism, or even to confront an aestheticisation of politics with, as Brecht and Benjamin suggested, a "politicisation" of art. Forbes is a poet of sociable disjunction, not militant opposition, and his texts do not bridge gaps. But by never disavowing their literary limits, they do model ways in which the ethical and political dilemmas traversing everyday cultural practices -- spreading tea, watching television, talking economics -- surpass or even confound the aesthetic performative closure that his "I", writing poetry, must nonetheless always achieve.

IV

Thus an adequate description is always a socially adequate description. It has articulated no more and no less than is necessary to the membership of the sign. Independent of this social organization of detail, description must threaten infinity, an infinity which stretches beyond the time of speech in a gesture which points to speech's helplessness when bereft of hierarchy.

Susan Stewart (26)

Paul Keating always did, I must say, arouse a peculiar nostalgia in me. Something about his voice, the way that his facial expression on television condenses in his lips, and, especially, his "language", all act uncannily as after-images of stories that my mother has told since I was a child about her early life. A union official hostile to Keating once described him with good reason, I think, as "in style and approach ... a Labor politician of the 1940s", offering "essentially antiquated images" of "macho aggression, hard conflict, and upward mobility into the ruling class" which "no longer strike a chord among ordinary Australians".⁸² In most ways, that sounds right. Yet these comments are also aggressive in their appropriation of a past (those are not words that my mother would use to talk about the 1940s), and they may also miss something vital about the power of mediated public figures now to orchestrate multiple (as well as

communal) and strongly discordant, as well consonant, desires and "ordinary" memories.⁸³

They certainly do not explain why economics should have come to function in the media as a discourse of orchestration. While the work of social critics like Cot and Pusey can articulate the movement of a disciplinary logic of desire and power, and analyse the effects of its deployment in specific governmental institutions, there is still the curious story of media fascination to consider. After all, it is an esoteric movement. If the "doctrine" of economic rationalism has occupied for years a "central position in the political thought of the Right" in most English-speaking countries, it has not played in all of them a starring role on prime-time news, nor acquired, as it has in Australia, the emotional resonance of a discourse on national history and identity (as Peter Robinson puts it, on "what we have and who we are"); Robert Manne, a conservative critic of economic rationalism, has noted that "only perhaps in New Zealand have [these doctrines] passed through the body politic with less resistance".⁸⁴ Another way to pose the problem, then, is to ask why a disparate bundle of economic theories, administrative practices and political policies should have fused so powerfully, in those countries, as a visible and nameable "doctrine" for public debate.

In my experience, the public pedagogy of neo-corporatism had something to do with this, and with the special implication, both practical and fantasmal, of intellectuals in its procedures. One did not always have to share its aims and

values to take pleasure in the form of intellectuality personified by the Treasurer -- and commonly dismissed as "arrogant" in popular opinion polls. Where Grossberg (26-8) sees the projects of Thatcher and Reagan as responding to, respectively, a "sense of national economic crisis" (demanding "sacrifice in return for the imaginary construction of a promised community of prosperity"), and a "problem of national ego" ("often constructed and understood in terms of the changing position of the U.S. in international relations"), I would see the "economic literacy" campaigns of the Hawke-Keating regime as promising economic salvation (and thus the redemption of our imagined "compassionate" society) by means of an internationalist discourse on Australia's weak position in a changing world economy -- and on the need for a well-informed citizenry to endorse the modernising actions taken by the state on our behalf. This was a politics of consent depending not on mass spectacles or massifying events, but on a continual assertion of the magic of expertise -- on eroticised images of teaching, learning, (controlled) debate, (limited) consultation, and exquisite mastery of data.

However, in spite of its reliance on myths of information and its increasingly narrow appeal to the social sector that Lash and Urry call "the new 'cultural' petite bourgeoisie",⁸⁵ I am reluctant to call such a politics "postmodern" if by that I must understand a fading of ideology in the glow of the TV screen, or its swamping in a milky surge of affect. For there is an aspect of my response to Keating's language which, if I do not call it "ideological" in Rey Chow's sense ("that store

of elusive elements ..."), I am helpless, in an important way, to analyse. It is that necessary something-more that could make his pedagogy acceptable and enjoyable to me as to Millmow's class-specific "everyone", stirring some strong, stubborn, irrational and inherited, almost impersonal, conviction that yes, above all else, the national economy matters, because The Economy is the source from which all good and evil flows. It is something I sense in that "kynical" moment of truth in "Watching the Treasurer", when the swell of Keating's rhetoric is interrupted by a subject who says that he knows what its buoyancy means ("elegant apostle of necessity, meaning / what rich Americans want, his world is / like a poem") -- but still resumes his effort at being carried away.

Such moments of sentimental disavowal could be mapped on to Schulte-Sasse's model of postmodern subjectivity. Yet I think that even a basic historical reading of the values accorded to "the economy" in Australian popular culture, and to "economics" in the dreams of intellectuals, could say more about the affect flowing through political discourse on television. Something mythic, at least, is at stake when the same economic credo can be packaged for public consumption not only as a "revolution" or as an "invasion" by both sides of politics, but also as an inversion or a redemption of the assumptions of a nation's past. Not least as a revision of late 19th century struggles over free trade versus protection, in the context of which the Australian constitution was framed,⁸⁶ economic fundamentalism acts as a discourse of

continuity that promises to effect a return to imaginary origins. "The economy" is quite homely to white Australians as the scene of an ecstasy of Reason. In 1976, after another period of economic and political crisis, Donald Horne wrote casually that "Australia is one of the most 'economic' nations in the world -- almost from the start its 'economy' has been one of its main declared purposes for existing and it is characteristic that its political rhetoric should be to a large extent expressed in economic terms".⁸⁷

If Horne simplifies the "purposes" of a 19th century colony of settlement (since other values, after all, were always present), his acerbic critique of the components of a national economic culture is all the more useful as a corrective to current accounts of media culture which, by projecting an abstract postmodern subject who mirrors the structures of global capitalism on the one hand, and the formal properties of particular TV programming styles on the other, unduly simplify the historical burden ("experience") of everyday subjectivity. In a very basic way, we who live in a social world where it can be chic to squawk about micro-economic reform do occupy a specific position in a capitalist order, and we are at home in a media culture which does foster intense but temporary investments in fleeting images. We also, just as basically, live in a society where for almost a century the right of all "citizens" (a concept slowly wrested from the proprietorial control of white men) to a decent living wage, and the duty of the state to ensure it, were imagined as fundamental;⁸⁸ where "the economy" could

mythically be construed as a source of sovereignty, and politically conceived as a relational site for otherwise disjunct popular struggles, in short, for affirming agency; and where the translation of public debate as an anti-social economic jargon is at once intelligible, seductive and a mark of profound dispossession.

If this imaginary scene is Australian, the methodological issue that it poses is not: historical understanding may be weakened less by media-watching than by a critical refusal to understand "watching" historically. This is why Rey Chow's reading of feminist work on ideology for her theory of "ethnic spectatorship" seems so helpful to me. Developing work by Laura Mulvey, Teresa de Lauretis and Kaja Silverman, she points to the "responsive, performative aspect" of ideology involved in "any reception of culture" (22). But where this aspect is often romantically purified as resistance in studies of popular culture, she keeps it open to older readings of ideology as falsehood and illusion ("beautiful lies") insofar as these make it possible to say that "in what we think of as 'falsehood' often lies the chance of continued survival, sometimes the only way to come to terms with an existing oppressive condition" (23, my emphasis). In remembering this, cultural criticism may better be able (as itself an "ideological" practice in this sense) to respond in an active way to the dilemmas of social experience.

There is a real inappropriateness in too directly linking the media scenes I have described with struggles for survival. Yet it is also vital to see that even Alex Millmow's

parrots are confronting something oppressive. In any political culture based on expertise, the limits to acceptable critical speech are as carefully policed as the power to participate in public criticism is restricted. Neo-corporatist political pedagogy has a nasty way of feeding images and stories to the people, only to reveal the truth, at strategic moments, that serious knowledge, real power, is, of necessity, elsewhere; this is what people rightly describe as "arrogance", and this is also why squawking is a mimicry that defends us against being silenced as well as against belief. This is vital, because it helps to define the force of an apparent nostalgia -- that "sadness without an object" which for Susan Stewart "wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past that has only ideological reality" (23) -- that suffused so many public images and stories of economics in the 1980s and continues to pervade the struggles of the 1990s.

Distinct from, yet relaying, the hidden narratives of policy-making and of "real" economic debate, these images and stories shaped, by the very buoyancy of their rhetoric at times, a complex sense of longing: double-edged, two-faced. On the one hand, nostalgia for "The Economy" as a source of sovereignty and self-determination -- a precious myth that proved hard to sustain in the aftermath of financial deregulation -- was rampant in the ebulliently macho bombast of politicians identifying their own discourse with the power of market "forces", and denying the social reality of limits to (their mastery of) economic Reason; the government could

thus seem never more securely in control of its agenda for the nation's future than in the very moment of losing it. On the other hand there was, in all the speculation about the social meaning of "Keating" (his voice, his narrowness, his rhetoric), as it resonated over the decade with other images and stories of the decline of the Left and the epic collapse of socialism, a kind of sadness for that utopia -- always known to have an "only ideological reality" -- that Craig McGregor calls "the great humane ideals of the Labor movement".

In knowing its object, however (one perpetually demystified by historians and critics and activists from all sides of politics, and so perhaps now impossible to lose), this sadness was less strictly a form of nostalgia than the economic ecstasy that shaped it, and, in its feeling for the beautiful lies that somehow help people to act, more like a way of seizing against helplessness a "chance for continued survival".⁸⁹ The meditation on the "traditional" virtues of the Treasurer involved a comic version of taking this chance: in the process he became, willy-nilly, a transitional rather than a terminal figure of history -- his portrait a study in uncertainty rather than closure.

NOTES to Chapter Five

1. John Forbes, New and Selected Poems (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1992), 61. Further references, in parentheses in the text, are to this edition, which includes a selection from The Stunned Mullet (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1988).

2. My use of the present tense here refers to the fictional moment of the poem. The political narrative subtending my analysis is more complex. As Federal Treasurer during the boom and bust of the late 1980s, Paul Keating aroused intense media interest in his person as well as his "economic rationalist" policies (freer trade, financial deregulation, and privatisation of State assets). In June 1991 he challenged the then Prime Minister, R. J. L. Hawke, for the leadership, which is decided by the Labor Caucus. Hawke won, but Keating challenged again six months later and won by a handful of votes. He was Prime Minister for a little over four years, winning a general election in 1993 but losing to the Liberal-National Coalition in March 1996.

The focus of my argument in this chapter is mostly on the period 1986-1990 when, in the midst of economic turbulence, basic changes were effected in the ways that Australians conceptualise the role of the State in economic affairs and thus in citizen's lives. Later, Keating would reinvent his image: from embodying "economic restructuring" in the ways I examine here, he went on to promote as Prime Minister the themes of "history" and "social justice" (Aboriginal rights, republicanism, multiculturalism) considered in the next chapter. Appealing to intellectuals and community activists but less attractive to the largely white working-class and rural constituencies who bore the brunt of his economic reforms, this shift was widely blamed for Labor's defeat in 1996.

3. Paul Keating in pre-election debate with the Leader of the Opposition, John Hewson, ABC-TV Lateline, March 1990. "Inflation will come back" here means "inflation will go down". It did.

4. Mr Murdstone is the sadistic stepfather in Charles Dickens' David Copperfield (1850). Frank Langella adapted his stage interpretation of Dracula for John Badham's romantic film Dracula (1979).

5. Max Walsh, "Now, it's a question of pride for Paul", Sydney Morning Herald, October 11, 1990. Standards have changed since Walsh wrote this; in 1996, Peter Costello (Liberal) became our first true "right-of-centre Treasurer".

6. In March 1986, Keating told John Laws on air that Australia could easily become a "banana republic". By the end of the show, the \$A had reportedly dropped four cents. In the

longer term, the remark was canonised by journalists for inaugurating a historic shift away from expectations of continued domestic growth, and towards cutting wages and reducing foreign debt. The 10th anniversary of the remark was solemnly marked by all major newspapers in March 1996, one economics writer going so far as to declare the banana republic "a chilling reality"; Paul Cleary, "Banana republic vision comes true", Sydney Morning Herald May 14, 1996. Such hyperbole primarily allows journalists to celebrate their own professional power to create financial "events"; see n. 77.

7. See Graham Maddox, The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1989) and Dean Jaensch, The Hawke-Keating Hijack (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

8. Stewart, 26.

9. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (New York: Columbia, 1985).

10. On the individual as "appendage of a leader figure", see Ansgar Hillach, "The Aesthetics of Politics: Walter Benjamin's 'Theories of German Fascism'", New German Critique 17 (Spring 1979), 99-119.

11. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger, Art and Politics (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 61-76. Future references in parentheses in the text.

12. Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

13. On the significance of this genre in the 1980s, see Stuart Cunningham, "Style, Form and History in Australian Mini-Series", Southern Review 22.3 (1989), 315-33.

14. Paul Kelly, The Hawke Ascendancy: A Definitive Account of Its Origins and Climax 1975-1983 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1984) 31.

15. See Helen Grace, "Business, pleasure, narrative: The folktale in our times", Cartographies: Poststructuralism and the Mapping of Bodies and Spaces, ed. Rosalyn Diprose and Robyn Ferrell (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 113-125. For an example of a discourse of sentimental ethnicity (Irishness) legitimising the Labor regime, see Fia Cumming, Mates: Five Champions of the Labor Right (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).

16. See John Edwards, "Paul Keating: A Lust for Power", Sydney Morning Herald, September 24, 1988. The same discretion about private life is not usually extended by the media to private citizens.

17. Edna Carew, Keating: A Biography (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 5. Symptomatic of Keating's later distancing of his Prime Ministerial persona from the Treasurer's harsh mission is the way that in Carew's updated biography, Paul Keating: Prime Minister (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), Keating's own birth begins the story: "Paul John Keating was born on 18 January 1944 in the suburb of Bankstown, New South Wales, in Australia, the first child of Matt and Min Keating" (5).

18. Carew, p. 12. See John Lyons, "Our Prime Minister in waiting", Weekend Australian, August 22-23, 1987; Phillip Knightley, "The Real Keating Revealed", Sunday Telegraph, August 20, 1989.

19. Carew, p. 1; Geoff Kitney, "Coarse Keating put off course", Australian Financial Review, December 31, 1987.

20. C. M. H. Clark, A History of Australia, vol. V, The People Make Laws 1888-1915 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981) 40-41. I am citing here Clark's portrait of William Guthrie Spence, from which this excerpt may clarify both the political configuration and the metonymic style of discourse I have in mind:

Thanks to his teachers [Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris, Bellamy and Blatchford] he, too, could look with fervour to a new world, blessed with plenty, purified by justice and sweetened by brotherly kindness. Yet he laid up for himself modest treasures on earth: he yearned for a block of land and a house in which to foster individualism, and all the petty bourgeois virtues. . . . On women and Aborigines he dropped not a word. He wanted a society in which white Anglo-Saxon men could get on: women could help these men to climb a few rungs on the ladder. He knew nothing of romantic love between man and woman, nothing of the vision splendid on the sunlit plains extended, nothing of the 'dynasty of man'. For him socialism was a question of how many 'bob' [shillings] a man got in a day. He was an Australian trade unionist.

21. Arguably, popular political culture in Australia does not tolerate "ecstatic identification" with any Leader at all. Certainly, Keating's subsequent effort as Prime Minister to run on the slogan "Leadership" failed badly at the 1996 election. The theoretical point at issue here, however, is not whether this is an Australian "peculiarity" but whether the model of identification is useful for analysing television.

22. Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "Toward an anthropology of self and feeling" in Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion ed. Richard A. Shweder and Robert A. Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 143.

23. Michelle Grattan, "Ideological Spectacles: Reporting the 'Rat Pack'", Media Information Australia 60 (May 1991), 9.

24. Craig McGregor, Headliners: Craig McGregor's Social Portraits (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990), 77. Future references in parentheses in the text.

25. Elizabeth Grosz, Jacques Lacan: A feminist introduction (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 175. Grosz is glossing here the work of Luce Irigaray.

26. Jean Baudrillard, Fatal Strategies: crystal revenge trans. Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Niesluchowski (New York: Semiotext(e)/Pluto, 1990), 12. My emphasis.

27. Alan Ramsey, "Black, blue and deep in the red", Sydney Morning Herald, December 1 1990.

28. See Graham Freudenberg, Cause for Power: The Official History of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Labor Party (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1991).

29. "Keating? Welfare boss says: No way", Sydney Morning Herald, October 24, 1991. My emphases.

30. James McClelland writes of a "narrowly based" erudition, "shallow" learning, and "the narrowness of Keating's economic expertise"; "A moneybags not a PM", Sydney Morning Herald September 10, 1987. On the other hand, Peter Robinson sees "a mind that is set on expanding its horizons"; "Take a good look at Keating and Co", Sun-Herald August 30, 1987.

31. See Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), Part V ("Ways of Believing"), 177-98.

32. Lawrence Grossberg, It's A Sin: Postmodernism, Politics & Culture (Sydney: Power Publication, 1988), 38. Future references in parentheses in the text.

33. Thus Alan Bond's victory in the 1986 America's Cup yacht race was construed as a political triumph for the Hawke regime; see Doug McEachern, Business Mates: The Power and Politics of the Hawke Era (Sydney: Prentice Hall, 1991); on Bond, see ch. 4 above and Graeme Turner, Making It National: Nationalism and Australian Popular Culture (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 15-40.

34. David Burchell and Race Matthews, eds, Labor's Troubled Times (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1991); James McClelland, "Keating turns Labor into a designer label", Sydney Morning Herald June 16, 1988; Andrew Scott, Fading Loyalties: The Australian Labor Party and the Working Class (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1991).

35. Patricia Mellencamp, High Anxiety: Catastrophe, Scandal, Age and Comedy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

36. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "Electronic Media and Cultural Politics in the Reagan Era: The Attack on Libya and Hands Across America as Post-modern Events", Cultural Critique 8 (Winter 1987-88); 138, 126-7, 150-2. Future references in parentheses in the text. Schulte-Sasse sees Nazi aesthetics as pre-postmodern in contrast to the archaizing "print culture" emphases of U.S. neo-conservatism (125). A similar argument is taken to different conclusions by David Harvey in The Condition of Postmodernity (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). Harvey claims that an image-dominated aestheticising regime is displacing a mode of ethical apprehension based in "narrative". Assimilating cinema and photography to television, he posits a "spatial" Image culture fixated on "surface" appearance; his theme of a corresponding loss of "depth" (narrative, history) is consistent with Schulte-Sasse's account of the decline of ideologic's superego-driven subject. But where Harvey demands a return to meta-theory and a search for unity within difference, Schulte-Sasse questions "the very possibility of sustaining forms of cultural politics whose sense of responsibility encompasses the whole of society" (152).

37. Phillip Hayward, "Culture, Logic and Criticism", Media Information Australia 61 (1991), 72. Hayward is reviewing Fredric Jameson's Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.

38. A strong critique of the value of the concept of identification for analysing Reagan's use of television is Kenneth Dean and Brian Massumi, First and Last Emperors: The Absolute State and the Body of the Despot (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1992), ch.3.

39. Rey Chow, Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between West and East (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1991), 22.

40. Cited in Michael Gordon, A Question of Leadership: Paul Keating, Political Fighter (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993), 10-1.

41. See Pateman, The Sexual Contract, and Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication" in The Anti-Aesthetic, ed. Hal Foster (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 126-134. Famous for its methodology for thinking the postmodern image as "more-visible-than-the-visible", this essay is also a classic articulation of the rhetoric of media flow -- invasive, excessive, obscene, solicitous, "a large soft body with many heads" (129) -- to a discourse on the death of the citizen.

42. Gloria-Jean Masciarotte, "C'mon Girl: Oprah Winfrey and the Discourse of Feminine Talk", Genders 11 (Fall 1991), 81-110. In a note to her remarkable essay, Masciarotte uses the phrase "muscular orality" (107) to describe the style of US TV hosts who, like Geraldo Rivera, engage in "the beating up of the different speaking subject". Keating did not and politically could not do this: Australian TV has no homegrown equivalent of these shows, although by the mid-1990s many right-wing "tabloid radio" shows were mimicking their sensibility. What Keating as Treasurer did instead was "beat up" on anyone differing from him by imposing on all occasions his white masculine "working classness". Keating's own term for his often highly entertaining media mode was "throwing the switch to vaudeville".

43. For example, Peter Robinson, "Time to rotate the top job", Sun-Herald November 10, 1991.

44. Alan Ramsey on ABC-TV Lateline (Seducing the Media), June 4 1991.

45. Peter Hartcher, "Keating becomes a victim of the 'intelligence trap'", Sydney Morning Herald November 2, 1991.

46. Derek Parker, The Courtesans: The Press Gallery in the Hawke Era (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), 5.

47. "Colquhoun", Sydney Morning Herald November 4, 1991.

48. For a Lacanian reading of this "thing" as objet petit a ("a sublime, evasive body which is a 'thing of nothing', a pure semblance without substance") functioning in diverse political systems, see Slavoj Zizek, "The King is a Thing", New Formations 13 (1991), 20. A slightly different version of this argument is in Zizek's For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a political factor (London: Verso, 1991), 255.

49. See Mike Seccombe, "From Paul to John, special delivery", Sydney Morning Herald October 25, 1989: "Some 2,000 years before modern politics ... Demosthenes was asked what he thought the most important part of rhetoric. He replied: 'delivery, delivery, delivery'. Keating's got it. Hewson hasn't".

50. Alex Millmow, "Profile: Paul Keating", Australian Left Review, 130 (July 1991), 3.

51. Peter Robinson, "Time to rotate the top job". Robinson is comparing faction politics in Japan and Australia.

52. Slavoj Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology (London: Verso, 1989), 29, discussing Peter Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Zizek continues his own argument by analysing a more basic operation that he calls "ideological

fantasy".

53. Baudrillard, Fatal Strategies, 9.

54. Millmow is alluding to a famous joke by Keating (who specialised in macro-economic reform): "now in every pet shop in Australia, the resident galah is talking about micro-economic reform".

55. Robert Garran, cited by "Cassandra" (Senator Peter Walsh, A.L.P.), "Rationalists winning some, losing some", Australian Financial Review November 19, 1991.

56. "Colquhoun", "Once upon a time...", Sydney Morning Herald 21 August 1989.

57. Michael Pusey, Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes Its Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-2. Further references in parentheses in the text. The term "stateless society" is cited from J.P. Nettl, "The State as a Conceptual Variable", World Politics, 20 (July 1968), 559-92. Pusey explains that Australia's "structures are in many essential respects symmetrically opposite to those of the United States (where the state has the full strength of an empire in relation to other foreign states ...) but which is, as all the literature agrees, the archetype of a weak state in relation to economic interests within". In contrast, the Australian state has always had a strong "internal authority" while remaining externally weak (15).

58. David D. Hale, "Australia's Economy: Can It Survive Free Trade?", Weekend Australian November 16-17, 1991.

59. James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 219. He is discussing Susan Stewart, On Longing.

60. Annie L. Cot, "Neoconservative Economics, Utopia and Crisis", Zone 1/2 (nd), 293-311. Future references in parentheses in the text.

61. Economic rationalism can also be described as a revival of purist economic liberalism. For Robert Manne, "the stimulus for this revival were [sic] the publicists for the governments of Reagan and Thatcher. Its most influential authorities were von Hayek and Milton Friedman. Proponents of this doctrine sought to achieve rapidly a global regime of universal free trade; the privatisation wherever possible of State-owned enterprises; the rapid deregulation of finances and the national economies; and a return to what was generally called 'small government'". Robert Manne, "The Future of Conservatism", Quadrant January-February 1992, 49-55.

62. Peter Robinson, "In search of elusive economic panacea", Australian Financial Review December 11, 1991. My emphases.

63. In this kind of journalistic discourse, "economic reality" or "the global economy" works as a Lacanian "big Other" to which reference must be, as Zizek points out, "radically ambivalent" in that "it can function as a calmative and reassuring influence ... or as a terrifying paranoiac agency". Slavoj Zizek, "The king is a thing", 28. See also For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a political factor, 256-62.

64. Wolfgang Kaspar, "The Revolution We Have to Have", Weekend Australian October 12-13, 1991.

65. The phrase "a simple order" is Kaspar's. In fact, while the neo-Confucian model has attracted some in the Labor party, the Liberals have rather looked to New Zealand for inspiration. However, it is worth noting far from simplifying its political form as Kaspar would wish, New Zealand has accompanied its rationalist revolution with a complex new electoral system making it hard for any party to obtain a clear parliamentary majority.

66. G.O. Gutman, "Rational view needed on the playing field", Australian Financial Review, December 23, 1991. Gutman writes as an investment funds manager.

67. Some of the most violent proponents of the second view were Labor politicians such as Gary Johns and Senator Peter Walsh in his "Cassandra" column for the Australian Financial Review. Slavoj Zizek argues that the dream specific to fascist corporatism of "having capitalism without its excesses" always requires an other to be scapegoated as the cause of those excesses when they result, as they must, from the structural disequilibrium of capitalism; "Aime la nation comme toi-même où le libéralisme et ses vicissitudes en Europe de l'Est", Futur Antérieur 8 (1991), 89. The bitterness of ALP figures like Johns and Walsh, however, is related to a definitely non-fascist preferential voting system under which Labor owed its power, especially after 1990, to interest-groups opposed to its economic policies. In railing against "greenies", child care subsidies or Heritage legislation, these figures lamented Labor's democratic dependence on its "guilty" others.

68. Michel J. Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and Joli Watanuki (eds), The Crisis of Democracy: Report to the Trilateral Commission on the Governability of Democracies (New York: New York University Press, 1975).

69. Cot's assessment of the ambitions of the Chicago School is shared by Donald N. McCloskey who calls Becker "the Kipling of the economic empire"; The Rhetoric of Economics (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 76. For a

feminist account of "new home economics" in a broader context of debate, see Rhonda Sharp and Ray Broomhill, Short Changed: Women and Economic Policies (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), and Marilyn Waring, Counting for Nothing: What Men Value & What Women Are Worth (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

70. Cot's argument is much more nuanced than I can indicate here. On Becker's head of the family, for example, see her analysis of its diverse sources in "the theory of collective utility functions, the neoparetian model of revenue-sharing ... and the physiocrat's notion of the legal despot" (299), and her subsequent analysis of the social Darwinism rearticulated by the associated theoretical figure of "the child-object" (301f).

71. Cot points to the unacknowledged link between "the monetization of nonmarket time" and "the development of ... so-called underground, parallel or 'shadow' economics" (306). We can extrapolate from her argument the simultaneous emergence of homelessness as the "extra-social" product of neoconservative utopianism, and of a rhetoric blaming homeless and unemployed people for the personal time-mismanagement held to cause their situation. See Eric Alliez and Michel Feher, "The Luster of Capital", Zone 1/2 (nd), 315-359.

72. George Bush's famous description of Reagan's policy imaginary as "voodoo" economics can here be given a Judeo-Christian frame of reference more appropriate to its cultural determinants.

73. Robinson, "In Search of Elusive Economic Panacea". In economic literature, Argentina is regarded as the nation most like Australia in that they share a common past as territorially huge, affluent, agriculturally based and Europe-identifying Southern "settler" democracies, and of trying to secure this position with protectionist economic policies and a populist political culture. To this list, Le Monde added in 1992 a "crisis of apathy" called "Argentine Syndrome"; "Aust. 'in Argentine Syndrome'", Australian Financial Review March 3, 1992. For a serious comparison of the two economies, see James Levy, "The error in Argentina's ways", Sydney Morning Herald April 19, 1995.

74. My emphasis. Pusey is thinking not only of the ecological disaster threatened by the contradiction between the Social Darwinist assumptions of neoclassical economics and its own "almost absolute refusal to adapt" demands to finite resources, but of the logic pursued by state public servants who want to eliminate the state's public services, and to avoid the "Argentine road" by turning Australia into "a totalitarian American 'business democracy' along South American lines" (12).

75. Peter Roberts, "Rich to get richer at the expense of the poor", Australian Financial Review, November 22, 1991. Four years later Max Walsh, a more ardent economic rationalist

than Robinson, quietly admitted to readers of the business pages of his newspaper that "Australia runs the tightest welfare system of all the advanced economies"; "Menziess was right, after all", Sydney Morning Herald December 21, 1995.

76. See Michael Keating and Geoff Dixon, Making Economic Policy in Australia 1983-1988 (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1989); on the impact of managerialism on social policies, Christine Jennett and Randal G. Stewart, Hawke and Australian Public Policy: Consensus and Restructuring (South Melbourne: MacMillan, 1990).

77. The semiotic sensitivity of financial markets becomes a matter of concern after deregulation, when stray remarks by politicians can trigger excessive economic events. However, the reportage of these often brief events is also structured by media power fantasies. When the \$A dropped in January 1992, the Australian Financial Review reported with pride that government advisers blamed market reaction on one of its headlines which had inadvisedly used the words, "massive fiscal stimulus" ("\$A fall tells Keating to watch his step" January 13, 1992). A full analysis of economic discourse in the 1980s media would need to examine these fantasies and their narrative role in shaping events, as well as the conflicting time-horizons entailed by the various genres of economic commentary in interaction with the interests of different fractions of capital.

78. Paul Foss, "Landscape without Landscape", in Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture ed. Paul Foss (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1988), 1-3.

79. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 176.

80. Cited in Jacqueline Rose, Sexuality in the Field of Vision (London: Verso, 1986), 141.

81. Mark Twain, Traveling the Equator, cited by Kylie Tennant, Australia: Her Story [1953] (London: Pan Books, 1964), 8.

82. Lindsay Tanner, "Labourism in Retreat", in Burchell and Matthews, Labor's Troubled Times, 73-4.

83. For example, Rolando Caputo has pointed out to me that a different "Keating" resulted from stressing the Italian-elegant side of his image instead of (as I have) the Australian-eloquent side. The notion of an orchestrated discordance specific to the acoustic as well as visual media image also allows us to register the convergent force of those politicians who are, as Keating was, intensely disliked by many of their constituents. Often called "polarising" or "divisive", these figures are in fact more remarkable for their power to attract and absorb media interest to a

disproportionate degree (becoming, as we say, the "centre of attention", often at the expense of critical policy debate).

84. My citations here are from Robinson, "Search for Elusive Economic Panacea", and Manne, "Conservatism: The Way Ahead".

85. Scott Lash and John Urry, The End of Organised Capitalism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 295.

86. See Graham Freudenberg, Cause for Power, and J.A. La Nauze, The Making of the Australian Constitution (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1972).

87. Donald Horne, Money Made Us (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 12 (my emphasis).

88. See Roberta B. Sykes, Black Majority (Hawthorn: Hudson Publishing, 1989), and Sophie Watson, ed., Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990). Both these texts offer histories of struggles for citizenship by people excluded from the social contract of labourism, and both give accounts of conditions in the present which underscore the imaginary aspect of the "rights" I am discussing here.

89. I owe my appreciation of the importance of this distinction to Dipesh Chakrabarty, who has pointed out to me that when cultural critics dismiss "nostalgia", they are often trying to deprive people of the weapons they have to fight with.

Chapter Six

LUNCHING FOR THE REPUBLIC

Feminism is rarely represented as missing from public debates in "today's multicultural Australia". This is a media phrase for a discursive field that shapes as well as celebrates contending models of national culture. Within this field, the fact that models do contend -- in such genres as the report, the public submission, the interview, the guest column or personality spot, the letters page and the talk show, the documentary or drama series, the critical review, the current affairs programme and the formal TV debate -- is valued as marking the difference of "today" from the bad old days of monocultural national identity.

Feminists who use these genres are often confronted by images of feminism's role in national life that are cheerfully incommensurate. Australian feminism is simultaneously superseded (by post-feminist concerns, for example), bureaucratically entrenched and repressive (according to its men's movement critics), dispersed or diversified (by feminisms of difference) and too rigidly a white/Anglo-Celtic/middle-class/baby-boomer/heterosexual movement -- while still having "a long way to go" in securing for women anything like equal empowerment in public institutions, equal representation in parliament, or really equal pay. Feminism is much contested. That is why it is a force in public life.

So when a republican movement re-emerged in the early

1990s, with claims to political credibility and rising community support, there was something disconcerting about the speed with which it produced a "woman" problem: by 1993, "where are the women?" was a question assumed to make sense of feminist as well as female positioning in relation to constitutional change. It made sense by denying our involvement; if women weren't in there, shaping the future form of a multicultural Australia, then we must be out of it doing something else. Yet this question was most often posed in the media by women -- in fact, feminist historians -- trying to articulate a feminist "republican" problem: what was wrong with the republican imaginary on offer in Australia? why had feminists said so little in such a momentous debate? "what", one asked, "do women want?"¹

During Australia's short history as a constitutional monarchy, republicanism has existed as an often radical tradition and women have always been involved. The launch in 1991 of a carefully diverse and respectable Australian Republican Movement (ARM) was supported or welcomed by a number of prominent women, including writer and activist Faith Bandler (a South Sea Islander descendant), fashion designer Jenny Kee, social policy analyst Mary Kalantzis, novelist Blanche d'Alpuget, politician Franca Arena and news-reader Mary Kostakidis. It soon became clear, however, that ethnic diversity and age differentiation were more important than gender to those arguing only for a severance of our formal ties with Britain (the "minimalist" approach). In real-political terms, this isn't hard to understand. Republicanism

can be derived from multiculturalism in Australia, where the fear of cultural difference as socially divisive is commonly if not exclusively or even correctly linked with an "elderly" Anglocentric perspective.

In this logic, a republic would give expression to changes already effected by the past twenty years of "official" multiculturalism in immigration and social policy; since millions of Australians have no links at all with Britain, it is sensible to replace a monarch 12,000 miles away with an Australian as head of state. When the republican goal was endorsed by the federal Labor government of the time, this diversity-management argument, typical of domestic multiculturalism since the 1970s, was combined with an "outward-looking" rhetoric of diversity-promotion ("Australia is a multicultural nation in the Asian-Pacific region") used to justify deregulatory economic reform in the 1980s. Since more than two-thirds of Australian trade now occurs within the region and closer political and military ties are forming with nearby countries (particularly Indonesia), while immigration and cultural policy is increasingly "Asia-minded", it is practical now to establish an independent identity.²

If republicanism cannot be derived from feminism in quite this intensely pragmatic way, the need to bargain for recognition does not usually discourage feminists from participating in any aspect of Australian politics. Second-wave feminism and multiculturalism are about the same age in this country; while the overlaps and tensions between them are not simple, new or static, both movements, in various ways,

have been deeply involved with government. On this occasion, a special invitation to get involved was extended even to those intellectuals critical of the pragmatism of political life under Labor. "A republic needs vision, after all", declared the Prime Minister's speechwriter, Don Watson, in a national newspaper in July 1993: "whatever shape the federal republic of Australia takes, there will be something unstructured, if not deconstructed, about it. I imagine it as aleatory, impressionistic, figurative, eclectic, bebop."³

Alas, Watson's own dazzling sketch for "the first post-modern republic" included only one individuated woman, a reporter from the New York Times who says of the republic: "But it's not important, is it?" For many mainstream republicans, the social category "women" connotes a plodding resistance, even a fink monarchist streak, in our society. While support for republicanism fluctuates, opinion polls always suggest that women are less inspired by the campaign; one released in October 1993 had only 41 per cent of women supporting a republic, compared with 56 per cent of men; by June 1995, the figures had risen to 45 per cent of women and 59 per cent of men.⁴ Australian women are often said to be more conservative than men in our approach to drastic change. There is uncertainty, too, about the meaning of the royalty cults and scandals beloved of women's magazines, their reach and form of appeal across boundaries of age, class and ethnicity. The present monarch is, after all, a woman, and some speculate that her physical remoteness and her Englishness may be less important than her gender and her

family problems to women for whom the national political process itself is both remote and overbearingly male-dominated.

In what follows, I attempt to think through my own unease about the relationship of feminism to republicanism in my immediate situation as an intellectual. The question "where are the women?" became a personal one for me when I tried to participate in an academic conference on republicanism, and found that I simply had nothing to say about my nominated topic, "Feminism and Republicanism" -- except that where I was in the republicanism debate was not easily accessible from my work as a feminist cultural critic. I take it, however, that the work we do as intellectuals does not necessarily or even responsibly always engage the "totality" of our persons. I do not think that the difference between my response as a citizen to republicanism (which is positive) and my non-response as a feminist intellectual constitutes a contradiction or a split. There may be many good reasons why feminism and republicanism cannot easily or directly be articulated.⁵ Clearly, a feminist does not aspire to be a "virtuous property-owning warrior-citizen"⁶ on classic civic republican lines, and Helen Irving has analysed the problems resulting from the persistence of a soldierly masculinism in the ARM campaign.⁷ What is not so clear to me is how feminism can be held to provide a general platform from which all issues of moment must always be addressed.

Being and becoming republican

First, let me be explicit about my attitude to republicanism. I think it is important. Whatever my doubts, I am not part of that intellectual community which is reaffirming itself routinely around a position of exteriority and a posture of scepticism in relation to this debate. I find deeply depressing Chilla Bulbeck's claim that "for women like me, white Anglo-descended, middle class by training if not birth, whether we are a republic or a monarchy hardly matters".⁸ After twenty-five years of feminism, I wonder, is that all we have to say? Are white middle-class Anglo women now so passive that they cannot want to make a difference to ensure that a change will matter? When did this happen? Or, to put it another way: how did white middle-class Anglo womanhood come to signify such indifference for its self-styled representative ("women like me") intellectuals?

For there is a gap between the "women" and the "me" in Bulbeck's formulation of a likeness. Worrying that only her gender divides her historically from "white nationalism" in Australia, she goes on to say: "I see that the national icons like the bushworker or the lifesaver are male, not that they are white". Yet Bulbeck knows perfectly well that these icons are white. She claims not to "see", but it is she who writes "that they are white"; in fact, to emphasise their whiteness, not their maleness, is the function of the sentence. So this "I" who does not see whiteness is a projection of some kind, fuzzily distinct from the writer of the text; perhaps a memory

of an earlier self, or a mark of a part of her present self still capable of blindness, but also a sign of identification with all those other women who -- unlike Bulbeck in her writerly role -- do not see the whiteness of our national icons.

Well, I am socially like the women of Bulbeck's description, give or take the "Anglo". I am also a feminist intellectual who has heard and read so much about race and ethnicity in recent years that I see whiteness almost before I see maleness, now, when I look at our old national icons. But I am not indifferent to republicanism. When Paul Keating made a speech in Parliament in 1992 about Britain selling out Australia in the Second World War, my heart stopped.⁹ I was profoundly moved -- and in a way that the relentlessly knowing, negative postures of traditional feminist "critique" can do little to modify and, these days (speaking personally), nothing to match. But this was not an emotive response to bushworker and lifesaver icons, nor even an anti-British feeling stirred by events before I was born. I was moved by a memory from my childhood in the 1950s and 1960s. I heard my father's voice telling stories about the guns of Singapore, about Winston Churchill saying "Australia is expendable" and the great Labor leader John Curtin defying Churchill to bring our troops "home" to the Pacific; and I recalled the political feeling of those stories. I remembered that other time when -- back before the Vietnam War, the radicalisms of the late 1960s, and then the long, dreary years of conservative recoil -- people dreamt of an Australia with its own foreign

policy, thus more room for experiment at home, and of an Asian-Pacific, not a White, Australia.

In other words, I was moved by the recurrence of a rhetoric of independence that I had never expected to hear in this country again. At some stage, probably around 1975 when the Whitlam Labor government was dismissed by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, using his "reserve powers" as the Queen's representative in Australia, I must have begun to assume that independence as a goal was for other people -- people in Nicaragua, for example. 1975 had a bitter effect on many Australians, including those of us who had, just three years earlier, helped to elect the first federal Labor government since 1949 with the first vote of our lives. The big-spending, high-wage Whitlam government was dramatically progressive on most issues dear to the "new social movements" of the time. It also made a serious mess of the economy, and alarmed US agencies by allowing wild talk about rescinding US military installations in Australia.¹⁰ When Whitlam was sacked in an atmosphere of crisis and intrigue, including tales of CIA activity against him, two convictions took hold in popular political wisdom: any future Labor government must put economic management at the top of its agenda; no future Australian government could risk offending the United States in defence or foreign policy.

Labor's years back in power under R. J. Hawke (1983-1991) did little to shake these convictions. So to hear the old rhetoric used again by Keating was extraordinary -- as though anything might be possible. It was heart-stopping in the same

way as the ending of the terra nullius doctrine by the High Court's Mabo decision,¹¹ and the destruction of the Berlin Wall; and the revival of that rhetoric was connected to these events. It recurred in a new national context, an unfamiliar world; it signified change, not nostalgia. Keating's attack on Britain's treatment of its former colony came in a speech made for a time when settler Australians have to renegotiate our own colonising history, just as the country's strategic value to the United States has suddenly declined; a time when "nationhood" is in question, and "independence", for the first time, a necessity.

Change can be quite shocking for white middle-class Cold War babies; for all the talk of revolutions, those of us who grew up in Australia did so under a political settlement of immense and dazing stability and in an ideological climate of seemingly endless fatalism. I sometimes think that the widespread tendency in feminism to know in advance that any event is just more of the same old story, more of the same patriarchy, the same racism, the same form of class exploitation ("nostalgia for something really old in something really different, which always [comes] down to the same old thing")¹², is in Australia as much a legacy of the Menzies era (1949-66) as it is a defence against the disappointments of experience. A bitter refusal to acknowledge our political successes, always insisting that nothing has changed, too easily becomes that old familiar feeling that nothing ever can change.

Yet for all that I can, like Chilla Bulbeck, project

another "I" that sees things somewhat differently. When I survey what Elaine Thompson calls a "shopping list" of constitutional reforms, I have a good idea what I'd like.¹³ For the centenary of Federation in 2001, I'd like a republican constitution including or accompanying some form of recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty; an Australian head of state, appointed not elected, with a strong ethical aura (as in Ireland) but purely ceremonial powers; an adversarial lower house elected preferentially from single-member constituencies, as at present, but with affirmative action pressures applied to party preselection; and an upper house for "states and minorities" elected, as at present, by proportional preferential voting, but with a strictly limited role of reviewing legislation -- no rejecting of the budget, no blocking of supply (as in 1975) and absolutely no way for unrepresentative minor parties to paralyse government. While it is, in fact, possible to justify all these choices from a feminist position, what I'd really like them to bring me is an endless Labor government -- an undemocratic and utterly impractical wish.

Here is the emotionally fuzzy core of my republican/feminist problem. If my enthusiasm for a republic is not yet significantly feminist, this is in part because it isn't really republican. I accept that Barry Hindess may be right to suggest that the republican ideal is itself anachronistic in the world today,¹⁴ and that sceptics who argue that the monarchy has a very low impact here (the "de facto republic" position) have a point. For me, the republican

ideal is even vaguer and more remote than the British monarchy. With many other people, I became a republican overnight; it's a vehement, instant thing, with shallow roots in my education and none in my experience. My enthusiasm rests, in fact, on a deep and abiding hostility to the Liberal Party; "republicanism" is the new name for my oldest, most stable political identifications, all of which were formed and continue to make sense in our present political system. Anything that threatens the historical legitimization stories of the Liberal Party, as republicanism may, brings me joy.

Given the Liberal Party's mix of economic libertarianism with social conservatism, such joy is not indefensible. But it is not a solid basis for contributing to republican debate. Constitutional reform is usually unachievable in Australia without bipartisan support; many republicans say that their goal may more easily be reached under a reluctant conservative government than with the advocacy of a divisive Labor leader like Keating.¹⁵ Old hatreds have their own conservative force: if mine distances me, once again, from those forms of feminism that foster a belief that nothing national or party-political really matters to women's lives (and that "women's" history is purely domestic), it is also sustained by memories and allegiances which decreasing numbers of Australians share, and which were shaped by that "stable" society whose basic organisation is now so rapidly changing. So I have found media debate about the technical difficulties of becoming a republic more sobering than off-putting, and I am not sure that it was altogether a bad thing that an ebbing of wild enthusiasm

followed from that discussion. Perhaps there is something to be said for a society organised around an absent power symbol, as well as with a history of relative indifference to aggressive patriotic display.

Feminist cultural critique, however, is not well-equipped to consider or assess what that "something to be said" might be, let alone to orient debate towards a non-militant form of republicanism. In the many disciplines that intersect now on the broad terrain of culture, we say that the academic project of feminism has moved into affirmative mode; the demonstration of a uniform oppression has long since made way for the study of women's diverse practices as well as of our differences, conflicts and complicities as historical agents in a colonial class society. Yet most feminist input to public debate still comes from historians and political or social scientists with a confident grasp of national institutions, adversarial processes and political structures of feeling little attended to in feminist cultural theory. For all the sophistication we have brought to bear in thinking identity and difference, feminist cultural critics have had relatively little to say about the non-canonical identities and allegiances (generational, regional, state-based, party-political) that a national movement can mobilise along with, or sometimes instead of, those of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

In this context, the problem with cultural theory is less the "academic" inflection it has given the project of feminist criticism than the narrow model of political culture as

primarily psychic, interpersonal and utopian that a preference for psychoanalysis and philosophy over more formal historical and social knowledges can impose: a model that is especially constricting in a country where a mere proposal to teach the Constitution in schools could be denounced, in 1994, as a plot to indoctrinate children. People of my age had a colonial school education; many of us know little about those aspects of the Australian political system that cannot be derived from personal experience. This may be one reason why feminist cultural critics of my generation have moved more slowly than historians to extend the affirmative work we do in our disciplines towards a positive feminist account, or a positive version, of Australian culture and history capable of influencing the process of national reshaping that is already underway. By "positive" I do not mean "patriotic". I mean an account that would be able to sustain what Ann Curthoys and Stephen Muecke call "a provisional reconstructive practice towards nationhood which investigates its rhetorical tactics".¹⁶

Curthoys and Muecke emphasise the discontinuities, as well as the continuities, between earlier radical nationalisms in Australia and what they call "the newer post-nationalism, a sense of nation informed by intense and cross-cutting multiplicities":

If the earlier nationalisms were predicated on unity (of race), exclusion (of Others), and on white exploitation of the land, then the post-national

varieties can be predicated on difference (both internally and externally), inclusion (a multiculturalism not confined to the European) and a re-legitimation of Aboriginal sovereignty over the land.(179)

"Post-nationalism" may not be the right term for these developments in a society where racism persists, as Curthoys and Muecke say, "with strength", and where the appeal of a rhetoric of unity remains strong.¹⁷ Even in the Keating vision that Curthoys and Muecke describe, it is unclear how, or in whose interests, a re-legitimation of Aboriginal sovereignty as endorsed by white settler institutions would combine with a multiculturalism administering "difference" on Anglo-Celtic terms. Keating transposed Australia's nation-founding military myth from Gallipoli in Turkey, 1914 (a losing imperial battle fought by "Anglos" against "others" in a European war), to the Kokoda Track in Papua, 1942 (a multi-racial victory against Japanese imperialism in the Pacific); any historical discourse organised by a theme of Men at War and an allegory of national economic self-interest remains nationalist in the most traditional way.

In calling for a reconstructive practice "towards" nationhood, however, Curthoys and Muecke want to stress the open and unachieved status of Australian republicanism and the opportunities that the radically changing context of national politics provides for new forms of mobilisation. Their point is not simply that the massive scale of these changes has left

practitioners of a hermeneutics of suspicion, muttering uselessly on the sidelines of most fields of contestation, open to the charge of indulging a purist and publicly-funded politics of self-marginalisation. More strongly, Curthoys and Muecke argue for a re-constructive mode of participation that could operate critically by promoting "post-modern, post-colonial and feminist" elements already circulating in national politics and the republicanism debate. This would mean working from particular examples of "what Australians have already achieved" -- such as the political gains of feminism, and the "immense discursive and narrative power" exercised culturally now by Aboriginal Australians -- in order to make the struggles for those achievements "exemplary" of what nationhood might be.¹⁸

This strategy exploits the vagueness of the republican ideal by asking what new ideals this new name at our disposal might be used to mobilise: it makes a republican "virtue" of experiment. This has a direct resonance with media formulations of the republican project: "post-nationalism" and, more oddly, "non-nationalism" have been used in headlines to invoke some unspecified, but highly desirable, aim.¹⁹ For Curthoys and Muecke, it also has practical consequences for the kind of history that an Australian republic would require. While national in scale and import, it could not, they stress, be nationalist: it would have to be grounded in an effort to grasp "the nature of the colonial relationships between indigenous and incoming peoples", and, as Curthoys points out in another context, it would have to assume that our only

shared past as Australians is "an international past, a myriad of individual regional and national histories that have been brought together in this place".²⁰

It should be easier and more exciting for feminists to develop a republican politics on the basis of these imperatives to work towards post-colonialism and to produce multiculturalism than to be carried away with old bipolar party enthusiasms. Yet the claims of feminist indifference suggest that matters are not so simple, and that the emotional structures of labourism still provide a more effective framework for responding to national issues. I think Peter Beilharz identifies something crucial about our unresponsiveness when he argues that we are living through the decline of the model of "industrial citizenship" which labourism put in place in the 1950s. What we need now, he says, is a reinvention of citizenship in the context of a "republicanism beyond labourism".²¹ But if this is easier said than done, more readily defined than desired, part of the problem may be that in Australia what Kobena Mercer calls the "not so 'new'" social movements, with their "'race, class, gender' mantra," have not only developed in conflict with labourism but also created positive programmes by a practical engagement with it.²²

A certain aphasia can follow from the decline of industrial citizenship. The struggle against the privileging of the white male worker as industrial citizen has shaped feelings and investments, as well as habits of debate, over a long period of time. Without that figure and its derivatives,

like the "white middle-class woman", so powerfully there, as a centralising instance making sense of our talk about margins, the value of familiar gestures suddenly becomes uncertain. Perhaps the demand for a distinctively feminist version of republicanism is one such gesture. There may be a diffuse expectation in the "margins" of republican debate that the centralising role played by industrial citizenship can and will be reinvented from the same old sources of social power (which do continue to exist), and that our choices are therefore limited to adopting a studied indifference or to making alternative proposals in a strictly minority spirit.

Perhaps this expectation of a reinvented symbolic centre is mistaken. I find it encouraging that an aura of buffoonery rapidly enveloped the efforts of Malcolm Turnbull and Thomas Keneally, prominent advocates of republicanism, to masquerade as emblematic citizens. What interests me is less their embodiment of an explicitly masculine patriotism than the way they also implicitly articulate a class model of intellectual sociality -- how they present themselves as prompters of a "popular" debate. Of course, Turnbull and Keneally present themselves to us not as professional intellectuals but as media personalities. Turnbull is the upper-middle-class lawyer/merchant banker as post-industrial citizen (with a family connection to Angela Lansbury). Keneally is the Irish-Australian novelist (author of Schindler's List) as organic representative of the petty-bourgeoisie. So they do not voice the interests of "a" class transcending the media world in any simple sense. Rather, their performances predicate the

national-popular as an audience for whom their own personae are central, and a popular debate as mimetic of their chat. In other words, they assume that public leadership is a function of what our pundits call (in eloquent self-hatred) "the chattering classes".

Not lunching with Thomas Keneally

One of the most remarkable things about the ARM literature is its emphasis on lunching. Both Our Republic, Tom Keneally's book of reminiscences, and The Coming Republic, a more useful collection of essays orchestrated by Donald Horne, are structured by lunch allegories in which personalities -- real celebrities in Keneally's case, imaginary social stereotypes in Horne's -- gather around a lavish supply of food and wine to discuss an Australian republic.²³ Our Republic is embarrassing in this respect, with its chapter "A Sunday with Neville" offering lifestyle details about "Jill" and "Neville" (Wran, former Premier of New South Wales), complete with bottles of Chardonnay; so giddy is the social whirl that, by the end of the book, Keneally has almost lost track of any issues extrinsic to his social calendar and his amazing job-opportunity at U.C. Irvine. There is a parochialism to this that may explain the book's failure to stir much fervour in the recessionary year of its publication, 1993. I am embarrassed by it, however, because the lunch-burble is all too familiar -- in form if not in setting or stellar quality -- from my own professional life. Our Republic

has an awful fascination as a book that sets out to celebrate the white male nationalist heritage (convicts, soldiers, the Irish), only to turn into a book about transnational chattering-class networking.

"Lunch" is an old-fashioned way for culturati to network; younger chatterers prefer, on the whole, to keep working the modem. But it has a role in ARM discourse that is more fundamental than its value as an index of shifting subcultural behaviours. "Lunch" is a democratised version of the literary conceit of the bourgeois dinner -- that set piece of so many novels, plays and films in which the conflicts and desires of entire social formations are fought out in exquisite detail in a unified space and time. (The Coming Republic in fact makes use of this antecedent in a comic and deliberate way.) In the context of republican discourse, a lunch scene stages the ideal of "free and rational debate" that characterises classical republican thinking and limits its claims to realism. Admittedly, the ideal Australian literary lunch is a boisterous occasion at which people get a little irrational and maybe speak a little too freely. None the less, the use of this conceit to package ARM polemics suggests an elision of basic questions about the nature of public debate in a media society.

As a utopian allegory of the social, lunch has its problems. It is basically monocultural in a liberal pluralist mode, questioning neither the forms of European bourgeois sociality nor the resonance of the hospitality trope so often used to assert the dominance of an Anglo-Celtic "home" culture

over more tenuously "invited" immigrant cultures (thus erasing our own history as the unwelcome guests of indigenous Australia). In this respect, a lunching model of national debate has much the same problems as the "better cuisine" rationale for multiculturalism; the role of exotic elements in both cases is to flavour the mixture, not to alter the basics. As Ghassan Hage has pointed out, new forms of racism can and do inhabit this state-promulgated tolerance.²⁴ Like a badly-behaved guest at an otherwise convivial lunch, the intolerably different legal citizen of Australia can still be told to "go home".

To be fair, neither Our Republic nor The Coming Republic invokes hospitality in this way. Both books aim to start discussion among a broad readership used to debating multiculturalism on all sorts of grounds, precisely because it exists as a working set of arrangements with supporters as well as critics across all of the great divides -- indigenous and non-indigenous, black Australian and white Australian, Anglo-Celtic and non-Anglo-Celtic, European NESB (non-English-speaking background) and non-European NESB -- used to map Australian society. The special difficulty that emerges with Keneally's slide from populism to networking is that neither the literary model of lunching nor the culinary model of multiculturalism can tell us how a conversation about changing the form of the nation can be extended to involve large numbers of diverse people on a national basis. This is really another version of the question, "where are the women?" -- the question of the historical conditions for democracy today.

Neither lunch nor multiculturalism is an intrinsically democratic institution. Multiculturalism is, first and foremost, a management policy, while any lunch that acts as a media talking-point is an event for social elites, who may or may not impersonate for the occasion particular social identities on behalf of different constituencies.

Now, I have no problem with the idea that the opinion industry works on a loop around which interest groups, most but not all of whom are also social elites, send each other messages and images about "what's going on".²⁵ A lucid grasp of this process and its uses and potentials is increasingly important to the mingling of marginal with mainstream politics, as the battle for the Native Title Act showed in 1993. On that occasion, the media were used by the major participants -- the Aboriginal delegates, the various factions of the Labor Cabinet, the Senate minor parties, the state Premiers, the mining and farming lobbies -- not only to pressure and outwit each other in public but to involve a national audience in what became a deeply stirring emotional drama with a cliff-hanger structure; a classic "underdog" or "battler" theme that slowly distributed maximal sympathy, for a while, to the Aboriginal position; and a (not undisputed) happy ending by Christmas.²⁶ At the same time, all these groups used the media pedagogically to inform, or misinform, each other and the audience about the significance of each new development. I learned more about Australian law and history, both indigenous and colonial, during those months of watching TV than in all my years of formal education.

By an even subtler and more impersonal pedagogy, exercised by the medium of television itself, I also acquired a greater respect for the politics of bargaining and negotiation to which all of these elites, including the miners' and farmers' representatives, were committed by virtue of taking part. In terms of credibility to fight again another day, the losers in this particular battle were the Liberal and National Parties who flatly opposed the bill. In doing so, they claimed to represent majority opinion. Perhaps they did. Racist scare campaigns, backed by some mining interests, certainly tried to persuade non-Aboriginal Australians that our homes were at risk as a result of the government's decision to respond to the Mabo judgment with national Native Title legislation. But by shutting themselves out of the formal arena of struggle over "what's going on", and with no other site of authority (unlike the bill's Aboriginal critics) from which to enter the discussion, the Coalition parties relegated that opinion to the limbo of the minor and un-newsworthy -- in media terms, to the past.

Of course, the media "past" is always temporary and open to revision: opinions marginalised during those crucial months of 1993 were aggressively present as "mainstream" again by 1996 (with, however, a lessened ability to reverse the effects of the Mabo judgment)²⁷. Whatever long-term effects such battles of opinion may have, it is at least clear that they do not operate in the "talking tableau" mode of a literary lunch. In order to facilitate a free and rational debate, the Enlightened fine-dining tradition stages a conflict of ideas

in a voluntarily constituted, benignly convergent setting in which all participants are equal; as Gary Shapiro points out in his discussion of Kant's aesthetics, "the temporary community and good cheer tend to obscure real differences of power ... which are likely to influence the outcome of any discussion of matters of taste".²⁸ Media opinion battles, in contrast, do not abstract ideas from social struggles. They activate differences, and at least some of the power imbalances, within as well as between social groups as these diverge and converge on particular issues, by staging their conflict as part of a multifaceted, open-ended and expansive saga of national life that only ever provisionally achieves its moments of resolution. In Australia's fairly small and cohesive media system, it is now the willingness and the capacity to take part in this process, and not the content of one's opinions, that define what can count, at any given time, as a "mainstream" position.

So the idea of a debate prompted by professional chatterers about the future of the nation is not necessarily ludicrous. The problem is that its exponents want to deny the specialisation of interests that gives people networking power in the first place as mediators on the loop. This denial may take nationalist and populist forms, but it thrives on a belief derived from literary culture, and from the genteel white middle-class notion of a "general" reading public, that the distinct taste cultures constellated by particular media shows add up to a coherent national public that is represented, as well as amused, by media personality

discourse. Lurking not too far from the surface here is a class fantasy that cultural workers may play the same symbolically central role in future that industrial workers did in the past. However, the media sphere, while vitally important, is not central to our society (it is not the only public sphere and it interacts erratically with others), and it is used by many political movements and social forces, very few of which are only class-defined, struggling to further their own interests in and through that sphere.

Not all intellectuals are chatterers, and not all chattering in the media can usefully be described as intellectual. I do not think that national debates are impossible today, or that intellectuals cannot take part in diverse and variable ways. I do question whether a national debate can take the form of a single, mass festival of opinion and ideas, a kind of mega-lunch, to which feminists should, as it were, bring a plate. If we let go of the idea of a long lunch-party about constitutional change, we can consider feminism's role in a more optimistic spirit. Feminists are highly skilled at using the opinion industry to further our social aims. We will have an impact in, for example, lobbying parties and public committees to allocate places to women; in formulating and promoting ideas for the "popular conventions" that are likely, in what must be a mediated re-enactment of the process that achieved Federation a century ago, to organise more formal debates in future; in working for or against a Bill of Rights;²⁹ and in shaping the symbolism that an Australian republic will need to adopt. The Coming

Republic, with its cover image of a red-headed white bloke in worker's shorts rolling up the Union Jack, shows how much is to be done in this respect.

But the feminism engaging with republicanism in these ways will not be a singular force that massively represents "women". As we never tire of pointing out in other contexts, feminism is a mixed discourse and a hybrid political space. Since feminist practices are connected as well as defined by all the involvements that women have as social agents, large numbers of women are only likely to engage with republicanism in a conjunctive mode of "feminism and ... and", where our interests as women will combine with our interests in the labour movement, and/or in the rights of indigenous people, and/or in the needs of differing old and new settler groups, of lesbians and/or working mothers, as intellectuals, and so on. This is to say that the formulation "feminism and republicanism", however handy it may be, is quite misleading. Only in a history of "isms" do these terms confront each other in a dual relationship. In practice, feminist inflections of republicanism are most visible and audible when at least three terms are in play. This does not mean that the concept of feminism is meaningless, or that white women who identify only as feminists (let alone Anglo-descended women, a goodly chunk of the population) should be invisible or inaudible. It simply means accepting that "the women" may never arrive in one spectacular contingent to seize the floor of republican debate.

Postmodern republican non-nationalism

If we approach the modalities of women's involvement in this orthodox feminist way, other questions can arise about the broad conditions in which the activist's problem of organising differences is projected as a nation-building issue. What could it mean for women to be invited to an "aleatory, impressionistic, figurative, eclectic" unification movement, and to bring our differences with us? What ideals are being mobilised by this particular republican movement? Before imagining republican futures, feminists need to examine more closely the political cultures that actually dominate the present. Once multiculturalism can be projected, with whatever degree of hypocrisy and controversy, as a model for reconstructing national identity,³⁰ forms of analysis used in the past to affirm a politics of heterogeneity and multiplicity against binary models of political opposition, and to articulate embodied social identities against an abstract form of citizenship, may no longer serve as well as they once did.

Republicanism certainly aims to produce what Homi Bhabha calls the "problematic unity of the nation".³¹ Even the sparest forms of minimalism would transform a federal constitution preoccupied with difference as the protection of "states' rights" into one investing national identity in the figure of a head of state; with the monarchy goes an externally-oriented way of uniting Australia. For this reason, fears that a republic will stir divisive and violent passions

largely inactive here today are not only expressed by "elderly" Anglophiles. A progressive Judge, Michael Kirby, defends the monarchy as a tempering force against nationalism ("I can live quite peacefully with the sombre fact that our head of government attracts only a 19 gun salute"),³² while migrants from parts of Asia and Europe have spoken as "Australians for Constitutional Monarchy" on the grounds that they came here to get away from nationalist conflicts. Writing as an anti-monarchist, Barry Hindess warns that "the very idea of a modern republic" presents "a misleading and potentially destructive image of a political community endowed with a distinctive common culture".³³

Voiced as fears, as experiences or as wagers on a logic of history, these arguments are unanswerable. They invoke powerful precedents from our international past that no-one can say with certainty will or will not apply to Australia in future. Another argument points to the genocide and the racist exclusivism that constitute a national past for Anglo-Celtic Australians. What makes this precedent uncertain is that our twentieth-century efforts to destroy Aboriginal culture,³⁴ and our exclusion of "Asians" with the White Australia Policy, were both entangled in a history whereby immigrants from different nations -- mainly but not only English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh -- united under the monarchy to become assiduously British in Australia. It follows emotionally, if not logically, that to get rid of the British monarchy is to end, not to initiate, a phase of virulent nationalism. Yet this is why Hage can convincingly argue that the "we" of

republican discourse implies an Anglo-Celtic identity: despite the thematic centrality accorded to multiculturalism, the "we" refers "to an old Anglo-Celtic history and deals with a present Anglo-Celtic problem".³⁵

Arguments from historical precedent usefully contest the unity of existing national narratives. They also tend to reiterate old histories, either minimising the conditions in which what Hage calls "republican nationalism" is currently taking shape, or maximising, as Hindess does, the distance between "now" and "then"; to paraphrase Michael Naas, they begin with a politics of which they proceed to give us examples, instead of beginning with examples out of which to invent a politics.³⁶ Like Curthoys and Muecke, I prefer to wager on the second course by asking what its proponents actually mean by republican "non-nationalism". The old nationalism was a protectionist as well as a racist settlement that thrived on Australia's cultural and physical isolation. What sort of unity is being projected for a free-trading nation at the mercy of world economic forces that no government can control? for a multicultural society officially unable to legitimate its norms with reference to a common culture? for a technologically constituted public sphere not only open to global information flows and regional political pressures but providing, thanks to a satellite launched in 1986, the first simultaneously national image-space in Australian history?

It is striking just how minimal most mainstream manifestos are when it comes to republican ideals.³⁷ Rather

than endowing Australians with a "common culture" in any positive sense, they focus on ways of managing differences, on a shareable code rather than a "community", in what they assume can only ever be a problematic national process. They offer plans for, not definitions of, republican government, how-to guides that declare no self-evident truths. What makes them mainstream in Australian terms -- compared to, say, ideas for a corporation-based democracy or for Swiss and Californian remodellings of the electoral system -- is an emphasis on formally effective, not morally redemptive, conciliation procedures that provide continuity and stability while securing the conditions for change to keep on being negotiated. Donald Horne, for example, wants a civic instead of a national identity, defined by a commitment to act in a certain way -- legally, constitutionally, democratically, respecting equality under the law -- and, in a major modification of non-Aboriginal tradition, to "custodianship of the land we share".³⁸

Don Watson agrees that a postmodern republic "exalts the nation less than the way of life", valuing tolerance, difference, worldliness, and:

humanist and even some romantic traditions, but not schmaltz, false sentiment and fascism. I have this sense that the pragmatism and dogmatic gradualism which delayed the moment for so long might end up serving us brilliantly.³⁹

This is about as close as republican non-nationalism comes to a unifying profession of faith. It has its "Anglo-Celtic" resonances, including the sweetly ironic approach to romanticism ("even some") and the stern attitude to schmaltz. As Jon Stratton and Ien Ang point out, the "way of life" is an old notion vaguely investing cohesion in mundane practices, not identities or ideals.⁴⁰ The real political bite, however, is in the "dogmatic gradualism". This phrase invokes with wonderful exactness a traditional labourist faith, shareable now with Horne's more classically liberal civics, in a pragmatism that stubbornly holds the line against revolutionaries, extremists, vanguardists and disruptively visionary radicals of left and right, while slowly, unsensationally securing the popular consent, and the practical means, that enable deep and lasting social change.

Perhaps what makes this dogma postmodern in Watson's invocation is that it has floated free of its anchorage in the dialectical struggles that over a century formed the Australian Labor Party -- capital vs. labour, Catholicism vs. communism⁴¹ -- to become more diffusely available as a participatory culture, not a partisan ethos. In modern times, the gradualism had an aim, something less final than a goal, called "civilising capitalism",⁴² and its mode of solidarity was exclusionary: non-unionists out of the shop, married women out of the workforce, cheap imports and "cheap labour" out of Australia, Aborigines out of the picture altogether. In Watson's version of postmodern times, the aim is to create, in a self-reflexive process of civilising pragmatism ("with ...

even some romantic traditions"), an open and inclusionary national, not white male working-class, movement beyond "tyrannies of all kinds", one among them "the market fetish and greed of the 80s"-- something much less absolute than capitalism. Pragmatism won its battle for a free-trade ethos in the 1980s. By 1994, Labor's unifying themes were affirmative action for women (ideally, preselection to 35 per cent of winnable seats in Parliament by 2001),⁴³ reconciliation between indigenous people and settlers ("Mabo"), and a republicanism based on multiculturalism. This dispersal of the singular adversary allows the shift from exclusion to inclusion to work smoothly; now racism, sexism, homophobia, are all "kinds" of tyranny, but capitalism is the horizon of the world.

I prefer to call this political culture "corporatist" rather than Anglo-Celtic.⁴⁴ Regardless of the circumstances in which it became so diffusely available, the discourse of pragmatism and gradualism is not now ethnically bounded; during Labor's time in government (1983-96), its resources were mobilised as effectively against the "extreme" free-market "radicalism" of the Anglo-identified Liberal Party as they were by diverse minority groups, feminists among them, demanding to negotiate the terms of their own inclusion in the national process. In response to those appalled by the idea of managing differences, this discourse (which is, I think, agnostic about "difference" philosophically construed, setting aside incommensurables as exceeding negotiation) points to the extreme violence of those contemporary nationalisms that treat

differences as unmanageable, challenges its critics to name alternatives actually available to government, and invites concrete proposals for improving the management process: that many a différend is activated at every moment of this process is not denied but frankly accepted as part of the way things work.

As with any form of corporatism, an exclusionary bottom line divides, in this instance, those who can and do contribute ("players" and their constituencies, including the "disadvantaged") from those who could but do not (such as the middle class "loony" Left). The penalty for the latter's lack of pragmatism is an increased disempowerment -- ridicule, irrelevance -- that they are deemed to have brought upon themselves. To be excluded on this basis is, however, a provisional affair. Since one aim of the process is to shut down violent expressions of social conflict, no single group is ontologically invested at an official level with outsider status.⁴⁵ Behaviours and attitudes, not identities, are scapegoated, including popular behaviours and attitudes (often but not only displayed by recalcitrant Anglo-Celtics) that threaten violently to scapegoat the imagined identities of others. The premise of this action is not that social conflicts are thereby solved or prejudice eradicated, but that these must never appear to acquire legitimacy or to engage majority opinion.

This is the political culture (and the culture of history) that has shaped the reemergence in Australia of a republican debate. In its managerial vesting of cohesion in

party politics and civil society, feminism and critical multiculturalism have a problem to confront that is not dispatched by invoking scary precedents or recycling critiques of ethnic or militarist nationalism. While any corporatism has tyrannical potentials, the policing of modes and thresholds of conflict in Australia is always partly enabled by a "public opinion" network that links, sometimes over lunch, government to the "business community", the media, the professions, the lobby groups, the think tanks, the culture industries and, under Labor, to the unions and those "great and innovative social organisations" (as Kalantzis and Cope describe them) "with more educative than legislative force: the Australia Council, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Human Rights Commission and so on".⁴⁶ Along with practitioners of all kinds of identity politics, feminists are firmly embedded in this network. We have helped to create it, and we continue, in our most severely critical as well as co-operative gestures, to refine and expand its capacities.⁴⁷

Any assessment of Australia's tyranny potential would have to consider the view that this resiliently casual network of like-minded souls represents a more immediate threat to liberty and cultural diversity than the prospect of an upsurge of flag-waving patriotism. But neither of these precedent-based scenarios, invoking Stalinism (or "McCarthyism") and fascism respectively, attends to the actual conflicts currently shaping the future. These are not nationalist conflicts in any ordinary sense. They arise, every day, from the complex political tensions involved in, on the one hand,

the cultural transfiguration of what were until quite recently "local" or "minor" interests (feminism, Aboriginal self-determination, anti-racism, gay rights) as symbolically but not always substantively major national issues, and, on the other hand, the economic internationalism -- sometimes expressing a "Pacific Rim" chauvinism, always accepting transnational capitalism as the limit of national policy -- that accompanies and has in many ways enabled (most obviously, in the form of immigration) the displacement of the old racist nationalism by multiculturalism.⁴⁸

A list of such tensions could be very long: it would have to include the appalling gap between the cultural prestige accorded to Aboriginality and the living conditions and prospects of many Aboriginal people; the discrepancy between the high feminist profile of the new labour movement and the effects on women workers of the enterprise bargaining and superannuation schemes supported by that movement; the harsh contrast between the cosmopolitan richness of urban cultural life and the social wasting of immigrant suburbs by long-term unemployment; the inconsistency of Australian human rights policies and practices at home and in the region. One way to frame such a list, however, is to note that a missing term in Watson's vision of tyrannies transcended by postmodern republicanism, and in Labor's historic compromise between identity politics and capitalism, is colonialism. Old as well as new colonial processes, "internal", regional and global in scale, continue to impact, obliquely and directly, on the very communities whose symbolic incorporation in the nation is

sought, in different ways, on both sides of politics. Yet the overlaps and discontinuities between the national imperialisms that created modern Australia, and the corporation-based colonialisms reshaping our society today, rarely figure in republican debate.

The conflicts resulting, however, are the everyday stuff of Australian politics in ways that becoming a republic is in itself unlikely to inflect towards catastrophe or redemption. These conflicts block the tendency of even the most gradualist of feminisms to identify with either the state or the networks of influence with which we are involved. They reinforce and help to create those "unnegotiable" differences that good management tries to set aside, even as they ensure that the nation "can no longer be conceived as a closed container for all that we are ... or any sort of limit for the directions of feminist thinking":⁴⁹ they regionalise, within and beyond the borders of the nation, feminist frameworks of thought and action. I believe they also undermine this version of corporatism's chances of ever unifying the people in a swell of singularly national subjectivity. This political culture works with varying degrees of limited difference (more limited by the Liberals than by Labor) and with a controlled (Labor) or free-market (Liberal) approach to managing social heterogeneity; within those limits, its models of citizenship can be embodied as diversely as you please.

To ignore this in our polemics is to miss the complexity of the unprecedented outpouring of public support for the athlete Cathy Freeman, rebuked by an Australian team official

for carrying the Aboriginal flag as well as the "white flag" at the 1994 Commonwealth Games. Widely read as affirming multiculturalism, this media-saturated moment of massive solidarity and proto-republican sentiment in fact confirmed a limit: no migrant athlete feeling unrepresented by the "Anglo-Celtic" flag would be so celebrated for making a comparable gesture. At the same time, the perception that Aboriginal athletes are entitled to differ in their relationship to Australian nationality is not a given of "history" but the product of decades of political and cultural struggle; the iconic power for many different groups of the figure of a black woman victoriously waving two flags cannot be reduced to an Anglo-Celtic ruse. At the very least, Freeman's gesture and its reception gave notice that the very idea of the nation is being redefined not only by the Australian Republican Movement.

The very idea of a national debate

It seems to me that if a popular national debate was underway by the mid 1990s, then Mabo, rather than the monarchy, was its focus.⁵⁰ Mabo is so central to the conflict of powers and values in Australia that it could sink the republic. Some people claim that, no matter which party holds government, a republic is inevitable some time soon. It isn't, of course: it has to be accepted at a referendum by a majority of electors and a majority of the six states.⁵¹ The result can depend on those states (Western Australia and Queensland) in

which significant areas of land may be reclaimed under Mabo, and where white panic is most likely to fuse with an intense anti-centralism historically shared with smaller states such as Tasmania. The state-based identities and passions that republicanism aims to temper will be crucial to the outcome here; Australians usually vote "no" to any proposal enhancing the powers of central government, even when we say we agree with the content of a proposal.⁵² Land management has been a matter for state, not federal, governments. Mabo changes that: by recognising the rights of some Aboriginal groups, it has had, as a republic would, a nationalising force. At the same time, Mabo fragments white images of a uniform Aboriginality; in reporting the politics of Mabo, the media have at last had to recognise differences and conflicts in Aboriginal opinion.

Popular debates, in which people in all walks of life talk and argue on an everyday basis about a complex shared concern, are quite rare. Something of the qualitative difference in this respect between "the republic" and "Mabo" -- media signifiers both -- can be grasped if we try to imagine using a lunch allegory to canvas the politics of Mabo. If the idea seems incongruous it isn't because "lunch" connotes consumption and urban banter (as though no Aboriginal people ever indulge in either) but because the social circulation of Mabo cannot be contained in that way. The republican lunch is a self-referring class figure in a media-centred discourse. There is nothing wrong with that, especially if we take it as shaping conditions in which a gesture such as Freeman's can, as Donald Horne puts it, suddenly be rendered "legendary" by a

wave of enchantment that surpasses media discourse;⁵³ to make frameworks for interpreting such moments is one of the things that lobbyists do. Mabo, however, is the name of a vast, intricate mesh of distinct but connected debates: technical matters of land tenure; ongoing national political struggles over economic, social, and ethical priorities as well as federal/state relations; philosophical questions about the value of governmental acts of redress; and profoundly emotional conflicts over ways of being attached to one's own land and culture -- each of which touches on something fundamental to Australian life.

Moreover, while Mabo as an instance of "the immense narrative and discursive power" achieved by Aboriginal people has had its brilliantly adroit media stars, it is not a product of personality politics. Nor is Mabo staged for "the people" universalised as media consumers. In this respect, recent Aboriginal constructions of the public sphere can offer "examples" of a politics capable, even under great duress, of going beyond (in Peter Beilharz's phrase) the labourism of the past and the elite networking of the present. While Aboriginal people do not "speak from the hyperluxury of the first world with the reflective thoughts of a well-paid, well-fed, detached scholar",⁵⁴ those of us who do speak from such positions have a great deal to learn from how Aborigines are dealing politically with first world institutions as specific intellectuals, while working from the base in Aboriginal institutions and politics that defines their organic relationship to their people. The national authority of a

Marcia Langton or a Noel Pearson is not media-derived, though it has been media-disseminated; it preceded and exceeds the intense promotion of their personal roles in the Native Title negotiations. Such authority is community-based, and it also derives from their use, for Aboriginal purposes, of specific professional and symbolic skills.

These skills have included using the media to criticise "the white 'take-me-to-your-leader' syndrome"⁵⁵ that animates so much coverage of Aboriginal activists, and to circulate Aboriginal models of authority and action in other cultural contexts. During the 1980s, for example, a model of cultural pedagogy was powerfully transferred to national politics; white Australians began to be addressed not as competent oppressors but as young and ignorant people "in need of teaching". More recently, Langton has used the model of "a theatre of politics in which self-representation has become a sophisticated device" to describe Aboriginal media practices; and the notion of an "actual dialogue", in which all parties test and repeatedly adjust imagined models of each other ("be it at a supermarket check-out or in a film co-production"), to define a working form of intercultural exchange.⁵⁶ Another model is diplomacy, with the terms negotiation and protocol being used to enable an ethics of intercultural conduct as well as to assert Aboriginal rights in the political domain.⁵⁷ Pearson has argued publicly for a manipulation of middle-class cultural prejudices ("to capture the middle ground ... you have to win them over by form")⁵⁸, and a calculated orchestration of radical and moderate approaches, in order to

translate "a different culture, different language" and "sometimes, pure emotion; ... anger and hurt and sometimes hatred about what has happened in the past" into "action or results, something that people will listen to".⁵⁹

If these practical models exploit the performative dimension and participatory potentials of a mediated public sphere in ways that do translate between at least some of Australia's communities, they also extend to the daily news and to magazines the "investigation of rhetorical tactics" that Curthoys and Muecke seek in a reconstructive movement towards "nationhood". However, they make the very idea of the nation provisional in ways that must complicate any contrast between the plurality of indigenous nations and a singular nationalism invested in a monolithic state, or between the divisive present and a more harmonious "non-nationalist" future. On the one hand, Europeans have been told, pedagogically and dramatically, that our nation-building culture is the object of a reconstructive practice; old euphoric modes of national address are rendered unusable for state occasions, and the shift from a rhetoric of guilt to an ethos of responsibility requires us to participate in the reconstruction -- a project which can carry its own euphoric charge. On the other hand, as the strength of the backlash against these changes suggests, actual dialogue and diplomacy demand a much more strenuous and cautious response to the task of articulating what Tim Rowse calls "the plurality of historical experience" in Australia, and the specificity of the narrative of nationhood as "colonialist effusion", than a

happy-families version of diversity can provide.⁶⁰

In 1996, the new Coalition government immediately took a confrontational approach to Aboriginal communities and organisations. Even under Labor, however, it was clear that no singular model of citizenship could be extracted from "Mabo" as a symbol of corporatist reconciliation. In the media sphere, all Australians are increasingly confronted with images of Aboriginal groups forming international alliances with other indigenous peoples, anti-colonial movements, and agencies such as the World Council of Churches and Amnesty International, to pressure or simply bypass Australian governments in order to secure basic rights for their communities. Moreover, the models of diplomacy and protocol are increasingly accepted by corporations seeking to negotiate amicable arrangements with the traditional owners of land.⁶¹

We are also confronted with Aboriginal regional self-government movements and distinctively urban voices challenging state-sanctioned Aboriginal organisations; and with a radically undiplomatic politics of critique and protest that continues to be necessary -- not least in feminist contexts -- to procure the kind of "discursive power" for real people, not a floating cultural abstraction, that can translate as social and political empowerment. Discursive power does not mean that Aboriginal interests converge with "the national interest" or coincide with the corporatist project. The same Noel Pearson who once used an inclusionary national rhetoric to accuse the Liberal leader of "urinating on a historic Australian achievement" when he threatened to

repeal the Native Title Act, has said bluntly in another context, "Mabo is extremely conservative. It is 90 to 95 per cent about protecting existing European interests".⁶²

Insisting that Mabo is a beginning, not a culminating point, for Aboriginal politics, Pearson consistently derives his own discursive power from his community in Cape York.

It is often stressed in discussions of multiculturalism that the position of Aborigines is particular: the indigenous people cannot be subsumed by a "national" policy that confirms their dispossession. The idea that an exemplary particularity can articulate something general has hovered on the fringes of theory for many years.⁶³ It is neglected, I think, because of the tenacity of a philosophical belief that "the" particular (but exemplarists would speak of "a" particular) can only oppose or illustrate "the" general, resulting in bloody particularism on the one hand and typification, more benignly, on the other. Republican lunching plays on the second possibility. It uses the cultural resources of popular comic realism, casting "the people" as a series of social types, to promote an additive, not a pluralist, model of multicultural nationality -- in fact, a colonial "logic of the collection" that, as Hage explains, exhibits the diversity of exotic ethnic life available in Australia.⁶⁴ The politics of Mabo have demonstrated the general inadequacy of this way of thinking, and they have also shown how challenges to it can sometimes work through national as well as local, regional and international frameworks.

Bruce Robbins has used the phrase "comparative

cosmopolitanism" to add to the inclusiveness and diversity of multiculturalism in the US context an edge of "necessary but difficult normativeness" that "makes room for moments of generalising ... without offering license for uninhibited universalising".⁶⁵ One generality useful to feminist critics that arises from the cosmopolitan example of Aboriginal media practices is that the possible nations we theorise can take shape in struggles to transform an actual nation; in this perspective on practice, the venerable opposition between identity politics, with their transversally local and transnational force, and a national politics thought only in terms of closure and containment, is itself of limited and local value. Mabo is not the only issue to have had a nationalising force while mobilising incommensurable interests in a transnational frame. The environment, massively, is another; so was an appeal by Tasmanian gay activists to the UN Human Rights Committee that forced the federal Labor government to introduce privacy legislation capable of overriding state laws that effectively prohibit homosexual acts in Tasmania. These examples are not interchangeable. However, like the long-standing commitment of Australian feminists and multiculturalists to the "regulatory practices and processes of social cohesion-building",⁶⁶ each has involved using the adversarial system to affect the contents and priorities of national politics.

To be involved is not the same as being subsumed by, limited to, or identified with a particular process. Something crucial about the abrasive flexibility of what I have loosely

called identity politics is as easily ignored in a purist withdrawal from the contaminating space of the national as it is by lurid projections of the dangers of a republic. Such politics are not based on an ideal of the common good, and they do not derive their goals and values from a covertly sectarian abstraction of "the" national interest.⁶⁷ For this very reason, they can construe both the state and the nation as practical sites of struggle and experiment. Moreover, social movements that collectively produce "experience" are neither motivated nor organised to exclude what Rowse calls "more troubling rhetorics"⁶⁸ from their own discursive spaces, let alone from the media or any other public sphere. Groups do try, of course; but it is much easier to eject an unwelcome guest from lunch than it is to purge identity politics of unnegotiably troublesome elements. To stress this is not to romanticise the ineffectual approach to politics that Beatrice Faust dismisses as "expressive" ("happy to let off steam -- especially if it can be done in front of a permissive and supportive audience").⁶⁹ It is rather to point to a real, even a pragmatic condition of the kind of democratic practice that Helen Irving envisages as "a process of continuous debate, of continuous attempts to articulate new rights, new institutions and new models of representation".⁷⁰

None of this thinking is alien to feminism, and it puts us in a stronger position to deal in a positive way with republicanism in future. The media-centred logic of republican discourse is not just an anecdotal aspect of its social circulation. One reason why our hasty "feminist critiques" of

classical republicanism and theories of civil society seemed so far removed from the realpolitik of Keating's republic is that the latter so baldly asserted the need for a national marketing image. It did not depend on restating the "same old" nationalist mythology precisely because it was intended for economic and political conditions in which the borders of the nation, and the powers of the state to close them, can no longer be taken for granted. Keating's republic was about international trade, not civic humanism, and sales psychology, not democratic participation; "becoming a republic" was supposed to make us feel better, which is good for the economy, and make Australia look better to its trading partners. Within the parameters of a managerial discourse, this argument may be right. However, what feminists need to do, in my view, is neither to accept nor to reject on principle a republicanism construed in general terms, but rather work out how to participate so as to further our particular agendas.

For example, the emergence of "locality rights" as a basis for creating a regional, rather than a national, politics for indigenous peoples in Australia and countries in Asia should help to remind us that the marketeers' republic is not a product of European folkish nationalism, though it may arouse and manipulate nationalist feeling.⁷¹ It is a product of a transnational economic and social order which savagely exploits women's labour and makes a mockery, in many places in our region and within Australia, of demagogic talk about citizenship. As trade unionist Pathma Tamby Dorai put it to a

conference celebrating the centenary of women's suffrage in South Australia, "fantastic economic growth is being projected for Asia as against Australia, but on whose backs?".⁷² Dorai's question was not simply gestural: Australian feminists could, she suggested, pressure Australian companies to develop a formal code of conduct recognising the rights of workers in the Asian-Pacific countries in which they are investing -- and her demand was itself an act of international pressure. A similar call has been made by a Bombay-based children's rights campaigner, Alpa Vora. Rejecting trade sanctions against Third World goods made by children ("protectionism dressed up as social concern"),⁷³ she argues for the acceptance of ethical hiring and wage policies by Australian investors; recognition of the growing child labour problems in Australia's own clothing industry; support for campaigns to provide schooling and health care to child workers in particular factories; and more co-operation between Australian aid agencies and anti-child labour groups in Asian countries.

If we think "regionally", in this way, of the republic as an occasion for an internationally oriented politics that uses the nation as open framework for action, then we are not back in the mythical world of bushworkers and the lifesavers; it is crucial that these were, historically, not only "white male" but protectionist national icons. We are in a world being reshaped in many ways by the emergence of Asian capitalism and by the mythology of what we call, for convenience, economic rationalism.

This is not unknown territory for feminists. It is the

very ground on which our practice of a conjunctive, not additive, pluralist politics -- feminism and labour relations, feminism and anti-racism, feminism and immigration policy, feminism and human rights, feminism and environmentalism, even feminism and cultural theory -- has been formulated and tested, often quite successfully, for many years. It is on this ground that we can work to make a difference between the monarchy and a republic. We may not succeed. But if we choose not to try, and in the end there is no difference, we will have no-one to blame (as we lunch, perhaps, at the Henry Parkes Motel, revamped once again to commemorate a monarchist Grandfather of the Republic) but ourselves.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. Marilyn Lake, "Sexing the Republic: what do women want?", Age, 2 December 1993; see also Helen Irving, "Feminists to turn up heat on the republic", Sydney Morning Herald, 20 August 1993.

2. On "Asia-mindedness", see Tom O'Regan, "Introducing Critical Multiculturalism", Continuum, 8.4 (1994), 7-19. On December 17 1995, Australia and Indonesia signed a security treaty committing each country to "consult" with the other if one faces "adverse challenges", and to "consider measures" to assist. While entailing no formal obligations to offer military support, the terms of the treaty could extend to the provision of troops to quell internal disturbances in either country. See "Treaty with Jakarta", Australian December 15, 1995.

3. Don Watson, "Birth of a Post-Modern Nation", Weekend Australian July 24-25, 1993.

4. 1993 AGB McNair Bulletin Poll, cited in Lake, "Sexing the Republic"; 1995 Herald-AGB McNair poll cited in Milton Cockburn, "Voter support strong, but only when they decide who leads", Sydney Morning Herald June 7, 1995.

5. See Anne Phillips, Democracy and Difference (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 75-88.

6. David Burchell, "The Virtuous Citizen and the Commercial Spirit: The Unhappy Prehistory of Citizenship and Modernity", Communal/Plural 2 (1993), 17-45.

7. Helen Irving, "Republicanism, Royalty and Tales of Australian Manhood", Communal/Plural 2 (1993), 139-51.

8. Chilla Bulbeck, "Republicanism and Post-nationalism" in The Republicanism Debate ed. Wayne Hudson and David Carter (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1993), 89.

9. Australian House of Representatives, Daily Hansard 27 February 1992, 373-4.

10. See Desmond Ball, A Suitable Piece of Real Estate: American Installations in Australia (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1980); Barrie Dyster and David Meredith, Australia in the international economy in the twentieth century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

11. See Henry Reynolds, The Law of the Land (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1987). The constitutional fiction that Australia was a land belonging to "no-one" ("terra nullius") at the time of British invasion in 1788 was overturned when

the High Court recognised a form of native title in Mabo v. Queensland (1992).

12. Jurgen Habermas, The New Conservatism (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 135.

13. Elaine Thompson, "Giving Ourselves Better Government" in Donald Horne and others, The Coming Republic (Sydney: Sun Australia, 1992), 148-60.

14. Barry Hindess, "The Very Idea of a Modern Republic", Communal/Plural 2 (1993), 1-15.

15. Warwick Brennan, "ARM hails Libs' win", Sunday Telegraph March 10, 1996. For confirmation of this view from a conservative republican, see Frank Devine, "Yes to a president, but no to the rush", Australian 7 March, 1996. On the left, Helen Irving argues that "Parkes's death in 1896 cleared the way for ... popular participation to develop. In an uncanny echo of history, Paul Keating's political demise in 1996 may do the same thing for the republic"; "The Grand Old Man", Weekend Australian April 27-8, 1996.

16. Ann Curthoys and Stephen Muecke, "Australia, for Example", in Hudson and Carter, The Republicanism Debate, 181. Further references in parentheses in the text.

17. In the federal election of 1996, the Coalition's winning slogan "for all of us" tacitly claimed that Labor had governed only in the interests of minority groups. That racism played a role in the success of this slogan is suggested by the electoral results in some parts of the country. Three right-wing white candidates from predominantly rural states were rebuked by their parties for making remarks widely interpreted as racist during the campaign; all received 'sympathy swings' in their favour at the election. One, Ms Pauline Hanson, was disendorsed by the Liberal Party for her unequivocally offensive comments about Aborigines. She stood as an Independent in a hitherto safe Labor seat, and won it with a 21% swing.

18. Curthoys and Muecke base their notion of the exemplary on Jacques Derrida, The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992). See also Wendy Brady, "Republicanism: An Aboriginal View", in Hudson and Carter, The Republicanism Debate, 145-8.

19. "An Australian non-nationalism", Sydney Morning Herald 12 Feb. 1994; "National independence a far cry from virulent nationalism", Financial Review 14 June 1994.

20. Ann Curthoys, "Single White Male", Arena Magazine 8 (1993-4), 28. My emphasis.

21. Peter Beilharz, "Republicanism and Citizenship", in Hudson and Carter, The Republicanism Debate, 115.

22. Kobena Mercer, "'1968': Periodizing Politics and Identity" in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, Cultural Studies (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 425.

23. Horne and others, The Coming Republic; Tom Keneally, Our Republic (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1993).

24. Ghassan Hage, "Racism, Multiculturalism and the Gulf War", Arena 96 (1991), 8-13.

25. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 177-89.

26. The negotiations involved having the Act passed by the Senate before a deadline imposed by an impending legal challenge to Mabo by the state government of Western Australia.

27. On the difficulties of, for example, legislating to extinguish native title on pastoral leases, see Rick Farley, "The political imperatives of native title", Australian May 15, 1996.

28. Gary Shapiro, "From the Sublime to the Political: Some Historical Notes", New Literary History, 16.2 (1985), 213-35.

29. See the special issue of Australian Feminist Studies 19 (1994) on "Women and Citizenship".

30. In recent years there has developed a dissymmetry rather than a clear opposition between the major political parties on this point. While the present Liberal leadership has shown a willingness to exploit racist and xenophobic feeling, and does express nostalgia for "abstract" citizenship, its policy so far is not anti-multicultural; much of today's policy framework was initiated by the Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (1975-83). Rather, Liberals oppose the regulation of cultural relations, the planning of cultural futures, and the very idea of "reconstructing" identity; they are less likely to elaborate new experiments in citizenship. In what follows, therefore, I focus on the Labor version as the more constructive and explicit of the two mainstream models.

31. Homi K. Bhabha, ed., Nation and Narration (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 5.

32. Michael Kirby, "Reflections on Constitutional Monarchy", in Hudson and Carter, The Republicanism Debate, 74.

33. Barry Hindess, 'The Very Idea of a Modern Republic', 15.

34. See Anna Haebich, For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia 1900-1940 (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1992).

35. Ghassan Hage, "Republicanism, Multiculturalism, Zoology", Communal/Plural 2 (1993), 117.

36. Michael B. Naas, "Introduction: For Example", in Jacques Derrida, The Other Heading, xxii.

37. For an academic elaboration of "postmodern" republicanism from a left-wing position, see Paul James, "As nation and state: a postmodern republic takes shape", The State in Question: Transformations of the Australian State ed. Paul James (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996).

38. Donald Horne, How To Be Australia (Monash University: National Centre for Australian Studies, 1994).

39. Watson, "Birth of a Post-Modern Nation".

40. Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, "Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in Australia and the USA", Continuum 8.2. (1994), 147; also in Multicultural States ed. David Bennett (London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

41. One factor distinguishing the history of the Australian Labor Party from that of the British Labour Party is the former's significant Catholic constituency; see Ross McMullin, The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). On the conflict over Communism, see Robert Murray, The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties (Melbourne, Cheshire, 1970).

42. Bede Nairn, Civilising Capitalism: The Beginnings of the Australian Labor Party (Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1973).

43. Not unexpectedly, the Labor Party's practical efforts to move towards this goal have been unimpressive; one painful aspect of its defeat in 1996 was the unprecedentedly high number of women elected for conservative parties from marginal seats, without recourse to a quota system. My interest, however, is in the cultural shift entailed by the adoption of the goal itself.

44. I argue elsewhere that corporatism as a political culture in Australia draws on Indonesian exempla and now looks ambivalently to Singapore as a model; "'Non-Nationalism' and 'Post-Nationalism' in the Australian Republicanism Debate", Trajectories II, 1995 Proceedings, Institute for Cultural Studies, National Tsing-Hua University, Hsinchu, Taiwan.

45. In this respect, Labor corporatism differs crucially from the more intensively analysed fascist variety of corporatism. On the latter, see Slavoj Zizek, "Aime la nation comme toi-même où le libéralisme et ses vicissitudes en Europe de l'Est", Futur Antérieur 8 (1991), 76-98.

46. Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope, "Republicanism and Cultural Diversity", in Hudson and Carter, The Republicanism Debate, 143. Of course, not all such organizations survive changes in government; their form, however, is in my view relatively durable.

47. While there is little rigorous analysis of the feminist culture of "mateship", there is at least a large literature on Australian feminism's experience with "playing the state". Useful analyses and overviews include: Ann Curthoys, "Australian feminism and the state: practice and theory", The State in Question: Transformations of the Australian State ed. Paul James (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 138-60; Hester Eisenstein, Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Suzanne Franzway, Dianne Court and R.W Connell, Staking A Claim: Feminism, Bureaucracy and the State (Sydney and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Sophie Watson, ed., Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990); Anna Yeatman, Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Femocrats (Sydney and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

48. See Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State", Critical Inquiry 19.4 (1993), 726-51.

49. Curthoys and Muecke, 190.

50. See Bain Attwood, ed., In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996); Murray Goot and Tim Rowse, Make a Better Offer: The Politics of Mabo (Sydney: Pluto, 1994); Tim Rowse, After Mabo: Interpreting indigenous traditions (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993); M.A. Stephenson and Suri Ratnapala, eds, Mabo: A Judicial Revolution (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993).

51. In most cases at least two-thirds of all electors must vote "yes" to secure this result. Votes cast in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory count only in the poll of electors.

52. Forty-two proposals to amend the constitution were put to the electorate between Federation in 1901 and 1993. All but eight were rejected, as were two further proposals for military conscription in World War One. Parliamentary Handbook of the Commonwealth of Australia (1993), 26th edition, 689.

53. Donald Horne, The Public Culture: An Argument with the Future (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 40-57.

54. Marcia Langton, "Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television ...". An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things (North Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993), 84.

55. Langton, cited in David Leser's profile of Noel Pearson, "The Cape Crusader", HQ, March/April 1994, 80.

56. Langton, "Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television ...", 84 and 35 respectively.

57. See Catrina Felton and Liz Flanagan, "Institutionalised Feminism: A Tidda's Perspective", Lilith 8 (1993), 56; Langton, "Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television ...", 91-2; Stephen Muecke, Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1992).

58. Cited in "The Cape Crusader", 84; see also Sue Cant, "Aborigines urged to target middle class", The Australian, 6 June 1994.

59. Cited in Keith Scott, "Last chance to translate grievance into change", Canberra Times 14 Oct., 1993.

60. Tim Rowse, "Diversity in Indigenous Citizenship", Communal/Plural 2 (1993), 49.

61. In early 1996, conservative politicians ebulliently testing their strength in Aboriginal affairs were asked to stop interfering by the mining executives and graziers who are usually their allies. See Fiona Kennedy, "Aboriginal consensus reached on Cape York", Australian February 6, 1996; and Marcia Langton, "No future in a return to racial paternalism", Australian April 18, 1996.

62. Cited in Cameron Forbes, "How Green Can A Black Afford To Be?", The Australian 6 June, 1994.

63. See Giorgio Agamben, The Coming Community, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1993); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1987).

64. Hage, "Republicanism, Multiculturalism, Zoology", 132. Hage is glossing Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

65. Bruce Robbins, Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 196.

66. Kalantzis and Cope, "Republicanism and Cultural Diversity", 143.

67. On "the national interest" as sectarian abstraction, see Graeme Turner, Making It National: Nationalism and Australian popular culture (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

68. Rowse, "Diversity in Indigenous Citizenship", 52.

69. Beatrice Faust, "Cultural clash of women in motion", Weekend Australian 15-6 Oct. 1994.

70. Helen Irving, "Swissterhood", Arena Magazine 11 (1994), 15.

71. See Terry Widders and Greg Noble, "On the Dreaming Track to the Republic. Indigenous People and the Ambivalence of Citizenship", Communal/Plural 2 (1993), 95-112.

72. Cited in Catherine Armitage, "Companies urged to halt Asian exploitation", The Australian 11 Oct. 1994.

73. Cited in Adele Horin, "Plea for businesses to combat child labour", Sydney Morning Herald March 6, 1996.

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