

an allergy

and

Novelists of the Past, Historians of the Present

by

Sunil Badami

Submitted in 2013 to the University of Technology, Sydney in fulfilment of
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Creative Arts

Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

Date: 15 August 2013

Abstract.....	v
Acknowledgments	vi
Foreword.....	vii
Synopsis of <i>an allergy</i>	viii
Creative Extract: Local History and Case Histories	10
Prologue.....	12
Case History No. 1: Post-Embolism Foreign Accent Syndrome.....	15
1.	18
Case History No. 2: Papillomatic Epidermodysplasia Verruciformis	25
2.	32
Case History No. 3: Hyperotic Tergo-Collitic Cochleitis	40
3.	44
Case History No. 4: Quasi-Ischiopagic Conjoined Identical Twin Corsican Syndromatic Limerence	53
4.	56
Case History No. 5: Somno-subluceate Puteulanic Morphitis	64
5.	69
Case History No. 6: Molluscular Dermatitis	78
6.	82
Case History No. 7: Acute Beta-carotene Toxicosis	94
7.	99
Case History No. 8: Proteus Syndrome Metatropic Dysplastic Dystrophic Gigantism.....	110
8.	116
Case History No. 9: Severe Hypo-thyroidic Thrombocytopenic Urticarious Heat Exchange Disorder	124
9.	132
Case History No. 10: Congenital Familial Prosopagnosia	140
10.	145
Case History No. 11: Acute Conjunctive Retiniasis.....	157
11.	161
Case History 12: Pseudo-Hyperthymestic Anterograde Regressive Amnesia	175
12.	179
Epilogue.....	190

Exegesis: Novelists of the Past, Historians of the Present	203
Introduction	204
Questions, Questions, Questions...	205
Approaches	209
History versus Fiction.....	211
Texts and Secrets	219
Ritual Transactions and Contractual Obligations	236
Audiences and Defences	239
False Document	243
The Great Australian Literary Hoax	247
Fake Memoirs and Assumed Names	250
Creative Freedom and Imaginative Empathy	253
Fiction, Faction and Truth	257
Authentic Rhetoric and Inauthentic Identities	260
Frontier Skirmishes.....	263
Fictive History and True History (of the Kelly Gang)	266
His Life as a Fake	269
Novels: The New TV?	271
Economies of Onymities	279
Good Artists, Bad Artists, Dead Authors	284
History as the Novel, the Novel as History	287
Literary Originals	293
From the Books Pages to the Front Page.....	296
Conclusion	300
Postscript: Truth and Fiction, Life and Art.....	308
Appendix I: <i>History</i>	310
Bibliography and References	324

Abstract

This thesis is comprised of a creative extract: *Local History and Case Histories* and an exegesis: *Novelists of the Past, Historians of the Present*. The creative extract is part of a much longer project, called *an allergy*, a multi-generic self-reflexive historiographical metafictional novel which explores ideas of history and fiction, memory and imagination, truth and identity across a number of genres, narratives, periods and voices.

That history and fiction share many similarities is an idea well-established by both historians, critics and novelists, from Lionel Gossman and Hayden White to Richard Jenkins and E. L. Doctorow. The fiction–history debate has also stood at the heart of Australian literary history and Australian history itself, coming to a head during the ‘history’– and ‘culture wars’ declared by then-Prime Minister John Howard shortly after his election in 1996.

These wars coincided with the so-called ‘memoir boom’ in which personal autobiographical narratives and first-person, present-tense fiction rose in popularity among a reading public hungry for ‘authentic’ stories, often by once-marginalised voices. Yet despite historian Mark McKenna calling for a dialogue between historians and novelists, the discussion seemed as vehement and vituperative as those surrounding the history– and culture wars.

The creative extract offers my own parody of the memoir popular during the 1990s, and explores issues of race, authenticity, history, truth and identity, issues that were raised in cases like the controversy over Kate Grenville’s *The Secret River*, reaching back to the Koolmatrie and Demidenko affairs. I use these controversies as a springboard to examine in the exegesis that follows questions regarding issues fiction and fictional truth, imaginative empathy and creative freedom, appropriation and attribution, national and individual identity, especially in the context of Australia’s long and ignoble history of literary hoaxing.

The exegesis examines the textual defences and broader contextual and moral criticisms in both controversies, analysing the rhetorical devices and narrative conventions common to fiction and history; it relates these problems and possibilities for negotiating them creatively and ethically to *an allergy*.

The conceptual rationale for this thesis is embedded in the work in every possible way. My overall argument is not so much that history and fiction, truth and reality, memory and unreliability are now blurred — for this is an argument that has been made numerous times before — but that the act of retrieving truth, identity, authenticity or memory constitutes a re-imagining of the very elements it seeks to interrogate creatively and critically.

The reader is ultimately positioned as an active creator of the text. The exegesis is followed by a short Appendix which contains a sample of a different section of *an allergy* by way of demonstrating this; while this section it is not offered for examination it showcases my deliberate merging of the boundaries of the scholarly and the creative.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Debra Adelaide her friendship, counsel, incredible dedication – and patience. Thanks to Katrina Schlunke, Paul Dawson, Bill Ashcroft, Elizabeth McMahon and Brigitta Olubas for their generosity and wisdom. Thanks too to Jane Kemensky for not only generously sharing her article, ‘Novelties: A Historian’s Field Notes from Fiction’ (2011) with me, but exhorting me to share it with others.

There are many wonderful writers and teachers whose work has inspired not only mine but whose example has inspired me. They are too many to acknowledge here, but I must make special mention of Robert Gray, whose poem *Diptych* sowed the seeds of this life’s work, and Geordie Williamson, who suggested the title *an allergy*.

Special thanks to Sushila Badami, a wonderful mother, good doctor and great storyteller, who has provided me with inspiration and support — both material and moral — for as long as I can remember.

But the greatest thanks of all goes most of all to my beloved muses three: April, Leela and Maya, without whom this — or anything — would have ever been possible, or even imaginable.

Foreword

The following creative extract, *Local History* (and *Case Histories*), is part of a much larger work, *an allergy*, comprising four discrete but interconnected narratives, voices and genres punctuated by short, related episodes.

Given *an allergy*'s length, it was deemed that to offer a sample of each narrative, the reading experience would be too disjointed and unrepresentative of *an allergy*'s overall structure, which interlaces these narratives in three repeated sequences:

- *Local History* (memoir) and *Case Histories* (recounted medical history)
 1. *History* (popular and academic history)
- *Local History* and *Case Histories*
 2. *Her Story* (epistolary novel and primary sources)
- *Local History* and *Case Histories*
 3. *His Story* (contemporaneous historical literary fiction)
- *Local History* and *Case Histories* (repeated over three sequences)

History and *His Story* (an evocation of contemporaneous 1930s fiction) are both over 90,000 words in length and *Her Story* (based on false documentary 'primary' mixed-media evidence and epistolary fiction) is as yet unfinished. *Case Histories* and *History* therefore (comprising fictional memoir and 12 connected short medical case histories), at a length of 70,000 words, was deemed an apt inclusion, especially given the discussion in the accompanying exegesis of the rise of 'narcissistic narratives' (Hutcheon 1984) and memoir, fake and otherwise.

However, given that the exegesis discusses a number of the genres and narrative techniques deployed in *an allergy* with specific reference to *History*, the narrative strand based upon popular or academic history, I have included a short extract in an appendix, to illustrate the points made.

In the exegetic interests of displaying the research and drafting processes involved in parodying historical discourse, my comments, deletions and outstanding research queries have been included for the reader's reference, as well as footnotes, endnotes and quotes. As this is an appendix, it is not submitted for assessment but it is hoped will illustrate in a practical and concrete way that the results of the exegesis's research have been implemented in *an allergy*, particularly *History*. The synopsis below is also for reference only, to offer an idea of *an allergy* in its entirety, while

acknowledging the fragmentary, lacunary nature of the text, and, perhaps, of history itself.

Synopsis of *an allergy*

Written as a picaresque saga spread across four discrete yet interconnected narratives, voices and genres across distant countries and in divergent periods as memoir, popular history, historical fiction, medical report and epistolary novel, *an allergy* explores the uncertainties of identity, the fictions of history and the pleasures and regrets of desire. It asks, among other things: are we who we are because of what we believe we know, or what we think we want?

***Case Histories* (medical case histories, recounted by a doctor)**

In a small country town, a doctor gathers his children on the verandah after dinner and tells them stories of his long and distinguished career: of the woman who starts speaking in foreign accents, despite never leaving the District; of the Siamese twins who fall in love with the same girl; of the man whose love of carrots turns him another colour; the face-blind family who don't recognise each other; and the man who becomes allergic to the love of his life.

***Local History* (a memoir of childhood by an adult narrator)**

That summer, as their elder brother grows more distant, as their parents' marriage falls apart and as a panther stalks the hills outside town, a child learns a lot about love. And finds out more than they want to know.

***History* (a popular historical text, with real and fictional sources, quotes and characters)**

On a Sydney tram, a part-time showgirl and full-time good-time girl gives birth. In a picaresque saga spanning the slums of the Rocks to the mansions of Bellevue Hill,

the casinos of Kings Cross and beyond the Black Stump, Martha and her son Argyle make and lose fortunes on stage and in clubs, in two-up joints and sly-grog dens, at a strange, singular time when Sydney's streets ran with blood and booze. And it's the story of a man, so used to getting anything he desires, suddenly unable to have the one thing he wants most.

His Story (an historical novel)

A strange half-caste foundling, swaddled in an army blanket and caul, is left at the gates of an Indian orphanage. In a sleepy cantonment in the dying days of the Raj, a young British-Indian woman struggles against the claustrophobic confines of club life and her own illicit desires with violent results. Running away to find his mother, shedding names and making up stories as he journeys through Bombay bazaars, travelling circuses and a perilous journey by sea, this boy learns much more than he could have ever imagined. And, torn from the things she loves most, Elizabeth Braithwaite discovers far more than she could have ever hoped for.

Her Story (an epistolary novel, with a combination of media extracts, diary entries and letters)

'Aurora by name, she was a roarer by nature.' And when her papers — diaries, postcards, newspaper clippings, letters and more — are discovered, revealing a past unknown to her children, do these fragments of a life, the unreliable evidence of a secret history, answer any questions, or provoke more?

**Creative Extract: Local History and Case
Histories**

*If you should ask me where I've been all this time,
I have to say 'things happen.'*

*We don't get far though, beyond these teeth:
Why waste time gnawing the husks of silence?
I know not what to answer:
There are so many dead...
And so many hands that have closed over kisses
And so many things that I want to forget.*

— *There's No Forgetting (Sonata)*

Pablo Neruda (Néftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto)

If you tell the truth, you don't need to remember anything.

— Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens)

Forgetting is a boon to be cherished.

— R K Narayan
(Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer 'Kunjuppa' Narayanaswami)

Prologue

FEELING EXPANSIVE, FORGETTING HIS OATH AND ETHICS, MY FATHER WOULD gather us on the verandah after dinner and tell us stories of the various interesting cases he'd encountered in his long and distinguished career.

Nursing another whisky — or *digestif*, as he liked to call them — while our mother washed up, he'd tell us about the man who grew into a tree; the woman who grew a third ear in the back of her neck; the Siamese twins who'd fallen in love with the same lass; the man who was allergic to his wife, and the woman who spoke in foreign accents despite having never left the District. As he always reminded us, he may have been terrible with names, but he always remembered people's faces — and beneath their skins, their stories. Or 'case histories,' as he liked to call them. Despite his preoccupations, he could still tell a good case history: and though my brother (by then in the grip of the hormones that had already spoiled his face and soured his mood, pitching him into his 'rebellious teenage phase') had already lost interest, I always wanted to hear more, even as the mosquitoes became ravenous and our mother called us to bed.

Although you might find some of these case histories hard to believe today, my father, professionally dedicated to the facts, pure and simple, wasn't a man given to deliberate untruths. But although he was always candid while recounting the case histories we got to hear after dinner, he wasn't so forthcoming about his own history, and we didn't know much about his life before he met and married our mother.

Nevertheless, he was well-respected in the District, (A pillara the community, said the Mair), even if my brother sometimes failed to accord him the appropriate deference. I was always proud when people conferred on me the esteem of being in the Doc's Family. Every extra lolly from Matey down the Milk Bar or a g'day from Wally Clifford down the Long Jetty Boatshed reminded me of the privilege of being in the Doc's Family, and kept me vigilant in protecting my father's hard-earned reputation — something my brother often neglected to do. I remember one of the few occasions my father raising his voice in one of his 'little' chats to my brother: I've worked too hard to earn a name in this town for a little lout like you to smoke it all away.

Still, I think the remonstrance only strengthened my brother's resolve to keep up that filthy habit.

My father was a man who had his own napkin ring when most men in town ate their 'tea' in singlets. He'd insist on drinks before dinner, and sometimes after as well, which is when we got to hear his case histories. Shiny Shoes Show Good Character, he always said, and nobody's shoes were shinier. It was only in regard to cleanliness that my father was ever strict with me (although he was forced by the Hormones and my brother's own scuffed behaviour to take a harder line with him). I hope that it's due to my father's influence in matters of cleanliness, mannerliness and preciseness that I've grown up to be what I am today. In later years, I often wondered where he ever found the intellectual stimulation his brilliant mind must have craved, let alone somebody to share the interesting cases he encountered — apart from us, of course. Our mother wasn't much for talking, especially that summer.

My father was a big man, he had big hands. His arms, cabled with veins, were covered in thick black hair. In later years I'd often wonder how he was able to practise so competently with such big hands, despite their being so powdery-soft. Rushing to him when he arrived home from the surgery, I imagined I'd be swallowed up by his big boa arms and deep brown rumble.

My father was always redolent of Old Spice and antiseptic. He cut quite a suave figure among the ladies of town, with his 'flash' cologne (as Mr Tuttle, the Town Wowser, grumped). Even now, it's a smell that fills me with comfort and reassurance, remembering breathing in the strong warm arms of his cardigan — though when I try to remember our mother's scent, it's always the overwhelming but equally heartening aroma of lamb chops and gravy. And something else I couldn't quite say, until years later.

We're small like our mother, but I'm dark like my father. Maybe that's why he'd wink at me from time to time, reminding me that like him, I too was shady. A touch of the tar brush, he'd say almost proudly, and in a town like ours, it was no mean feat to admit it.

WE DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT OUR MOTHER'S LIFE BEFORE SHE MET AND married my father either. She kept those details as closed as her bedroom door, which she locked with a key hung on a chain round her neck. She was a quiet woman, who, though small, was suffused with a lithe poise and unfathomable energy that enabled her to rescue me from intractable trees and my brother from deep sea rips. It was she who'd wanted to move near the sea, and later on, in that terrible summer before everything happened, she'd spend more and more time out on the dunes past the Spit, looking out to the inscrutable sea, the echoing breeze calling back to her in rhymes of empty shells and cold water. She taught me how to climb trees, and stand on my head, and do somersaults.

She had quiet skin, as though she were written on a blank sheet of paper. But if you held it up to the light, you'd see the delicate blue ink lines of her heart trickling down the underside of the page.

Sometimes by the window near the sink, her hands steeped in washing, a lock of hair straggling her forehead, I'd watch our mother suddenly look out the window, looking but not seeing. Even then I knew she wasn't looking at the back garden or the shed, but somewhere else, somewhere I'd never visited. She wouldn't be aware of my standing there, and after a while, she'd begin to hum a soft, tuneless tune that I didn't recognise, and even now, despite hearing it so many times (and with increasing frequency that summer) I still couldn't describe it. Wisps of it flit through me, like catsear hair on a windy day, and though I might grasp a note here and there, it's soon lost.

Case History No. 1: Post-Embolic Foreign Accent Syndrome

ONCE THERE WAS A WOMAN (MY FATHER BEGAN, CONTEMPLATING THE ICE melting in his tumbler) who started speaking in a foreign accent, despite having never left town. It happened after she'd suffered a stroke which had left her unable to talk. At first I thought she mightn't talk again: she seemed like a blackboard with the words roughly rubbed out. She knew what she wanted to say, but the words were lost to her, as though they'd been misplaced under the couch or fallen behind the refrigerator. You could see the frustration in her face as she rummaged around in the empty corners of her brain for the simplest expressions or phrases: for a while all she could say was 'dog.' Imagine asking for a cup of tea and it all coming out as 'Dog'd dog dog dog dog dog dog, dog.' I thought she might be a lost cause, though her husband said later that he'd never understood her better than when she said nothing but 'dog': he appreciated the eloquence of her silence.

When I visited her for a routine check-up, her husband was greatly excited, telling me that she'd started speaking again, but that she was 'torkin' funny.' I told him to expect that her speech to be a little wrinkled and creased after all that time away, that her voice would be crackly, and her teeth unwieldy around all those words, all of a sudden dusty and stuck with lint. However, it had more than a few wrinkles in it: she sounded South African, even though she'd never been to South Africa, never even left the District.

You know my own talent for accents (my father continued, ignoring my brother's groaning. I always enjoyed his impersonations — he'd often interrupt his story to do the Indian or the Cowboy to my delight), but I was amazed at the accuracy of the patient's accent: her 'r's rolled like the Serengeti, her 'a's were flat and barren, her 'e's were clipped and ridge-backed.

My prognosis was that due to some peripheral damage to the brain's speech and language areas (Broca's Area in the inferior frontal gyrus, but you needn't worry about that), it was reasonable to expect some flattening of the vowel sounds. It was simply a case of lack of practice, after her silence all that time. But it was extraordinary: although she didn't use any Afrikaans words, she had all the inflections of an Afrikaner. I gave her some exercises to strengthen the muscles in her

tongue and jaws, although I wasn't sure how they might work... and said I'd check on her the following fortnight to see how she was going.

You can imagine my surprise when her husband told me sadly that while she'd stopped speaking with a Boer accent, she'd started speaking 'like a frog, Doc.'

— What, croaking? I asked.

— I *wish*, he said, shaking his head. Like a Frenchie.

I changed the exercises and told her I'd see her again in a fortnight. However, the only change the following visit was that she spoke in a clipped, precise German bark. It was as if her mouth had become the loading dock of a busy sea port, and that while she spoke like a foreigner, she had become one to her husband.

(While my father didn't discuss his past, we sort of knew that he'd been well-travelled before he met and married our mother. So it was natural that he would have been able to identify the afflicted woman's different accents, as opposed to those down Middle or Doon Pubs who believed the world was divided into 'Us' and 'Wogs.' And 'Blackfellas,' if they were being charitable to the Jindy Mob down the Spit.)

In the end (my father continued), the patient spoke in so many different accents that it seemed to her husband the house had become like the Tower of Babel, filled with the cacophony of different voices, each stranger than the week before. When she started to speak in a Japanese accent, he spent three days down Middle Pub, out of his mind with memories of the War. It was the talk of the town for a while, the way he'd sit at the public bar, talking to anybody, talking to nobody, just talking, immersing himself in a sea of drawls like a hot swimmer on a burning day, his eyes closed with the pleasure of those laconic vowels.

The patient, seeing he was falling out of love with her, stopped talking herself, afraid of the effect of her affected speech, and he returned to the comforting silence of their house to bring her cups of tea in the sleepy afternoon, undisturbed apart from the tick of the hallway clock and the occasional sound of the boards breathing beneath them. They decided they'd write each other notes on pads they wore around their necks — apparently, you never heard them argue after that — but then, of course, you wouldn't. They always incinerated their conversations in the morning. Matey down the Milk Bar loved her because all she did was hand him her shopping list, never

holding him up on busy mornings with gossip (apart from the odd discreet note from time to time).

In the end, the Collective Silences (as they'd become known round town) ended up celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary, more in love than ever. Had a big shindig down the old church hall, filled it to the rafters with descendants and lamingtons. You could see how close they'd become in all those quiet years together, as though their binding silence had helped them understand each other so much more. All their children and grand-children and even the great-grandson all clamoured for a speech, which the old man scrawled on the blackboard at the back of the Hall:

Silence is Golden.

They all applauded and cheered, thinking it the funniest thing they'd seen. But by all accounts, it wasn't a very rowdy party (said my father, suddenly aware of clatter from the kitchen and our mother's stern shoulders as she washed up more loudly than usual).

1.

OUR TOWN WASN'T BIG LIKE BORRIGAL. EVERYBODY KNEW EVERYBODY else, and everybody else's business, though nobody said anything. Apart from little school, the shops (or what was left of them), the boatshed down the jetty and the servo up the highway on the way to the abattoir, we had three pubs: Top, Middle and Doon. The itinerant workers who came in to help bring in the prawns that got trapped spawning in the Spit, or the jackaroos who worked with stock in the hills drank and brawled down Doon Pub (the Lansdowne); the cockies and the shopkeepers drank and yarned down Middle Pub (the Norfolk), looking enviously on at the shimmering lights of Top Pub (the Royal Oak), patronage of which was limited to my father; Mr Goodrich the Solicitor; Mr Horsley the Vet; Mr Chislewitt the Bank Manager; the occasional Council bigwig up from Borrigal; and, when he came down from Orangetrees, Mr Fulbright, the biggest Squatter in the District. Even Sergeant Hudson drank down Middle Pub, though he did occasionally enjoy a complimentary lemon squash if he ever wandered into Top Pub while on duty.

Given that we had no roots in the District meant that we could be considered by some round town (though nobody ever said anything then) to be 'blow-ins,' reflected in the fact that our name did not join the roster of Fulbrights and Goodriches and Brownlows and even the odd Moran on the Cenotaph outside the old church hall.

(though it didn't register any Shillingsworths either, despite Snowy's drivelling dad Nigger and his father before him both serving — in Bill's case, it was said, with some distinction)

Still, as my father liked to remark, it was a welcoming place, once it decided you were 'true blue,' and it was a measure of the reverence he enjoyed that he had his own bottle of Johnny Walker Black kept on Top Pub's top shelf. The 'Doc's Bottle' was only ever served to my father. The other patrons weren't necessarily bothered. Like everybody else, they usually only drank beer — unless their wives were away visiting relatives or shopping in the Smoke, and then they'd drink rum till their eyes watered. And my brother and I, being the 'Doc's Family,' always enjoyed a complimentary pony of lemon squash in the Ladies' Lounge on the way home from school.

Unlike everybody else in town, who were related to each other some way or the other, through marriage and history, all we had was each other, and our position in town, as the Doctor's Family. Nothing more intimate than social standing to guide us. It was as if, in the emotional geography of the imaginary map of our family, all the roads I tried to trace dwindled into dead ends. I knew more about my best friend Charlie's family tree than my own and I was more familiar with the fragile branches at the top of the Big Fig outside our house than any of my own family's roots.

Charlie could trace her roots in the District back to our town's founder, her great-times-four grandfather, Major Fulbright, after whom the now extinct lyrebird *Menura plenusperspicii*, once exclusive to the now cleared old-growth bush up the back of Orangetrees, was once named. *The Chronicle (The District's Best-Selling Newspaper! Circulation: 400 and growing!)* even made a claim that Old Earl, Top Pub's landlord, was the rightful King of England, based on claims by Clarry Clackett (Chief Correspondent, Editor-in-Chief, Publisher — and rabble rouser, according to my father) that Edward IV was in fact illegitimate, and by rights, the Plantagenet line should have passed through the Black Prince's. Despite his private views on the monarchy, 'King Earl I' decreed free beer to celebrate his 'coronation' — as well as getting Barry Munday to insert 'Royal' when he repainted the pub awning a few months later — although only the patrons of Top and Middle Pub were invited to the celebrations.

Even the Morans and Brownlows and Shillingsworths could trace the lantana of their ancestry to whatever muddy shoots from which they sprang. And the Jindy Mob probably could all the way back to the Dreamtime, if they could remember it.

How difficult it was for my brother and me to place ourselves, when we had no grandparents to tell us stories, or aunties and uncles to spoil us, or cousins to compare ourselves to, or to knit ourselves into! Of course, we had lots of Uncles and Aunties, like Uncle Bob and Aunty Flo next door — every grownup was an Uncle or Auntie. But none of them looked like us, especially me, and it was only when somebody reminded me of my shady skin or my father's beak, that I realised how alien I was becoming — and that was before the Hormones threatened to take hold of me too.

From what I could glean later, with the meagre evidence I could uncover, was that my parents married away from our mother's own hometown, in the only whiff of scandal to touch them before my father was carried away. For all intensive and

narrative purposes, they'd eloped, and she'd left behind a fiancé when they'd escaped, her childhood sweetheart. I often wondered what might have happened if she'd never met my father, or stayed with her betrothed. Would I have been somebody else? Or even born at all?

(I remember my father saying in one of his little chats to my brother *Sometimes I wish you'd never been born at all*. I suppose to someone overhearing that — let alone seeing the words, stuck hard and black on the page in a way that they would not remain, spoken in haste and as quickly swallowed by the cicadas — it might be considered harsh, but surely my brother must have taken some consolation in the fact that my father did say 'sometimes?')

But I never tried to dwell on it too long, even after the silences between my father and my brother and my father and our mother grew and grew like dust-storms in the windy corridors between their rooms.

But if they'd never met, or never left, they'd have never come here, and Charlie and me would never have become best friends. I preferred not to think about it: thinking of that other possibility only made me feel less real.

And besides, it was a touchy subject. Even now, I find myself demurring from referring to it explicitly: it was as if not speaking of it left it constantly whispering in our minds. As my father often pointed out when discussing prognoses, what was left unsaid often spoke much louder than the words that struggled to hide the silences in between them.

And it seemed, as that summer wore on, and the gaps in the puzzle of my parents grew wider, that the silence blooming in our house, flowering with ugly flowers and thorny branches in all the quiet corners, had choked the light.

WE LIVED IN A BEAUTIFUL TREE-LINED STREET. THERE WERE ONLY FOUR streets in town, but ours was the prettiest, the best, dwindling into a cool, shady verge of pines and mangroves at the creek bank. Uncle Bob called it a dead end. The nicest around, though! he'd laugh, and if you ever saw our cul-de-sac, you'd undoubtedly agree. The trees in our street were thick and green, with fingers that smelled of earth and water, and which The Major had planted after he'd surveyed and pegged out the settlement.

After clearing the hills of bush and boongs for grazing and farming, he'd planted flame trees and grand fig trees along our street and down the shops for shade, and the big old fig in front of our house was the grandest of them all. I'd often spend drowsy afternoons in its dappled, sappy lap with *The Three Musketeers* or *Little Black Sambo* or *Tell Me Why* or *The Reader's Digest Book of Strange Stories*, *Amazing Facts* or whatever else I was reading then, rubbing my tender cheek against its barky stubble.

(I'd set myself the task of finishing my first big book that summer: *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I don't know how or why I saw myself in Scout; my brother wasn't anything like Jem, even if my father was everything Atticus was — and more. But it should have reminded me then how books aren't the same as life, no matter how hard it is not to believe them. And I can't tell you how much it bothered me how much Boo Radley scared me)

Often our mother would have to come out and swing into the branches to get me down for my bath if I didn't hear her calling. My hair covered in its leaves, my face speckled with tree dreams, my fingernails caked underneath with the wet soft tree skin. Of course, I was made to wash my hands thoroughly. Not all the dirt could be scrubbed away, though.

Although my father would often wink at our mischief where our mother might scold us, he was extremely particular about cleanliness. Cleanliness is Close to Godliness, he'd say, though his well-noted scientific rigour precluded any silly superstitions or religious fervour.

I loved the Big Fig, and I kept all my secrets in the crooks of its woody elbows. I'd read that if you had a deep secret you could never tell anybody else, you could whisper it into a hole in a tree. I had quite a few secret holes in the top branches. In season, I could get right to the top and come down with ripe figs, purpley and oozy, eating some and pegging the rest at unsuspecting passers-by. Once I hit Mr Tuttle, the Town Wowser, and boy, did I cop it when our mother finally got me down!

Like the townsfolk, the trees in our town formed a motley community: in addition to the figs, The Major had planted decorous old oaks, regal plane trees and stout elms; but the Council, trying to promote Lake Mungowrie as a holiday destination a few years back, had planted stands of palms and banana trees in decorated pots and old tyres cut out like swans along the strand near the Long Jetty, which had been a desultory sea wall, haunted by gulls and prawnies.

At first, the palms lent the town a tropical, almost gay air: the strand was renamed Le Grande Rue Fulbright (after The Major, and to distinguish it from Fulbright Road); there was talk of ‘money to be made,’ and ‘boom-times,’ especially in *The Chronicle*; but the Borrigal Bypass put paid to that, and when, after a few years, the promised tourists did not appear, the only visitor that summer — apart from the usual great, gawky pelicans skimming the lake’s brackish skin — was a lonely black swan, probably blown off course, which had started nesting with one of the tyres.

Soon all those brightly painted pots turned sour, fading like idle boats waiting for the tide. Apart from my father and the curry munchers out on their banana plantations, people didn’t come to settle in our town: the wonky fences on the abandoned houses revealed all those that had left.

And years later, it struck me how the infinite, intimate geography we all map out in our hearts becomes filled with more and more of those empty spaces in those wonky fences, those gaps where once people lived but live no more.

Out back, into the hills, great, ancient groves of gums: ghost, grey, red, stringy-bark, she-oak and others without any rememberable names, which you could imagine had been there since before the Dreamtime, so old even the Jindy Mob couldn’t have told you the meanings of their names, even if you’d asked them, even if they’d been sober enough to make any sense. Although most of the hills had been cleared, you could still make out stands, holding out on the bare cheeks of the hills, pockets of resistance.

Further on, bending over the Deception River as it wounded its way down the hills’ sleeping thighs, weeping, wavering willows shimmered down near the bridge near the lake, haughtily turning their backs on the mangroves higher up, who held in their eaves dark shadows that flew like unpronounceable whispers in the gullies out near the billabong, their sharp-nailed feet bitter when you went crabbing. You had to watch out for angry claws or unexpected roots... And on the highway out to the abattoir, the flame trees would blind the weary driver. Beyond that, nothing but the endless bush, black-top highways speeding into the continent’s dark heart, where all there was was sky and red earth and the Black Stump, looking out forever to nowhere...

But you could tell exactly where you were in our town just by looking down and smelling the leaves. There were pines by the lake, just where Calliope Creek

dwindled into its barren bed by the Spit, and the pungent aroma of pine-needles and rotting weed is a smell that always takes me back there. The salty squelch of the mangroves, the pithy perfume of the figs, the peppery pods of flame trees, the clean blue smell of eucalyptus: suddenly, I'm home again, even if now, the meaning of the word seems unfamiliar.

From the Big Fig you could see the whole town. Well, most of it. The only place you got a better view was up the back paddock out the back of Orangetrees, the biggest station in the District. Mr Fulbright, Charlie's father, owned most of the District's best land. The Major had claimed all the best land for himself and his descendants from Mystery Bay to Blackfell Point.

I remember once asking my father about what had happened when The Major had first settled here, clearing the hills of bush and boongs. It was strange to think that the same poor wretches that now eked out a sort of existence in the creek bed had once enjoyed the same cool glens and undulating hills; that they'd lived in the same spot where the Fulbright homestead, Orangetrees, now bustled its skirts around itself; that the land had echoed with their songs and voices and legends, now all quite forgotten.

— Yes, but the land was cleared, and roads put in, and cattle and sheep can feed and grow — rather than kangaroos and wombats just running around — and the homestead built and the town founded. So much work, so much effort! Settlers like The Major didn't have it easy, battling the elements and trying to make something of it. You should be grateful to them, what they did. Progress, like treatment, involves a degree of pain — *no pain, no gain*, as they'd say down the Shamrocks change shed, after another loss to Borrigan —

(which confused me. After all, what did my brother gain from his own tumultuous 'growing pains,' which my father called them when he was in a good mood, Sheer Bloody Mindedness when he wasn't?)

— Besides, we wouldn't be here if the Aborigines had had their way: where would you be if The Major hadn't discovered it, made something of it?

I couldn't say. It was all too confusing. I didn't, couldn't think about where I might be if I weren't here, if I were somewhere else. Would I be somebody else?

Yet, walking in the lush green moist grass and dung of the back paddock at Orangetrees, feeling the shimmering tall pasture's dew-fingers brush against our

boots, echoed streams of strange songs in the cold early sun, breezes whispering in the gums and the thicker scrub down the glen at the foot of the trail to the gloaming Hand Cave, such questions seemed not so much unanswerable as unimaginable. Those high dark cool gum tree cathedrals, their arms outstretched like ink lines in the sky, clear mirrors of light cast in blue and grey.

You could float for hours in your gumboots, immersed in the smells and sounds and sensationalness, if there is such a thing. Even if there wasn't, you know what I mean. Sometimes I wondered if there was anywhere ever as beautiful as our town, our whole world then. Still do, sometimes.

Case History No. 2: Papillomatic Epidermodysplasia Verruciformis

ONCE THERE WAS A MAN (MY FATHER BEGAN, EXAMINING THE BACKS OF HIS HANDS as I returned with more ice) who turned into a tree. There was no better feller — professionally or personally. He could denude a paddock in a couple of days, clearing it of nearly every tree. Called himself a ‘tree surgeon —’

I know what you’re thinking (he said, seeing my horrified face). *I’d* never call myself a ‘human arborist’ — after all, I don’t have the qualifications to call myself an arborist, so the presumption of taking a title without qualifications is beyond me.

But if it weren’t for the likes of him, how do you think we’d eat, without the trees cleared and crops planted? Or where we’d live, without houses or open ground? Or where we’d get the sleepers for the railway or the poles for the telegraph? We need trees, and not just for looking or climbing.

But don’t worry (said my father, more gently, as I tried not to think of all those felled trees, sawed to splinters), it gets better — the case history, at least, anyway.

There was nobody who knew more about trees and the land than him: he knew every species of eucalypt from the grey gum to the blackbutt, the paperbark to the scribbly bark, the she oak and the weeping willow.

He knew what lived in which tree, which tree meant water nearby, whether the soil was rocky or sandy, what tools he’d need to bring a tree down, then how to carve it up for the trucks.

His enthusiasm for chopping and sawing meant he rose pretty smartly through the ranks, eventually becoming head foreman. By all accounts, he wasn’t just a respected boss, but well-liked. His family had put down roots in the District almost round the time of The Major, and the clan had branches everywhere. He always made sure all his rellos were well-looked after.

He was a much-loved local down the Railway, Wimboola’s *only* pub, and always organised the meat raffle for the Shamrocks, of which he was captain-coach and treasurer. There was nobody he wouldn’t do anything for, nothing he wouldn’t do. You needed to get rid of that privet that had cracked the drains? No worries, and he’d bring along a red gum sapling to make up for it. A ghost gum was threatening the

carport? No problem — he'd carve a new silhouette and clean the gutters while he was at it.

He presented down the Base Hospital, with his hands in his pockets. He didn't know what had happened, but he'd been Getting these warts on me hands, Doc, and me wife reckons they're filthy.

The warts were scattered across his hands, and I immediately set to work removing them. Like most things, the simple solutions are often the most efficacious, especially as the dysplasia presented seemed of the common garden variety. I stuck to a course of antibiotics and recommended a few more sessions with the cryogun, which had produced some pleasing results. I recommended him not to play football for a while and to keep his hands clean, and advised him to return in a week or two when the swelling had subsided.

When he returned at the appointed time, it was clear treatment had been unsuccessful. In fact, the lesions and warts had mushroomed over his hands, and there were new growths over his trunk and lower limbs. The more I cut away, the more bloomed in its place. I ordered urgent skin culture and blood tests and asked the patient to stay for observation until they returned.

The growths on the patient's hands had thriven so much that he couldn't use them, and his wife would have to peel oranges or cut up his chops and feed them to him. Although he was an outdoorsy sort of bloke, and was itching to get back out into the bright, quiet bush, to break the green silence with his chainsaw's steady drone, his many visitors — coupled with his generally cheery disposition — meant he wasn't too down in his cups (from which he'd drink with a straw as his wife or Sister Gloria held them).

When we got the tests back it appeared that rather than contracting a new form of the virus, he in fact suffered a congenital recessive auto-immune condition which rendered him especially susceptible to papillo viral infection. In fact, the results revealed the only papillo viruses in his system were the same that exist asymptotically in all of us. What was most interesting was that because of the extensive intermarriage between the different branches of his extended family, it was likely they too carried that recessive gene.

We couldn't keep operating on him — it just made things worse. The warts had spread to most of his body, and layers of warts grew over layers of warts, until they hardened like amber resin, matted and tough as ironbark. In all my long and distinguished career, I'd never seen anything like it. So we did our best to make him comfortable as we investigated other treatment options. Sister Gloria put him in the private room looking out over the garden, which she tended as carefully and conscientiously as the one in her own home. It bloomed with hydrangeas and carnations and sweet peas and chrysanthemums — Sister Gloria was never much one for the natives.

Often treatment is as much reduction as diagnosis is deduction: when one has eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the cure. But there didn't seem anything, even improbable, in sight.

The macules and papules had started to lichenificate and spread to his feet, which seemed to have taken root in the cool corners of the bed, flowering around him like mistletoe choking a blue gum. He'd started vining all over the ward and pining for the cool green shadows of his place so we sent him home until further tests and opinions were returned.

For a man who'd not only been so strong and independent but had helped so many others, to become so helplessly dependent on his wife and Sister Gloria brought about a crushing (and, I must concede, an understandable) depression.

(my father, though ever optimistic, did not accede to depression, even when his increasing worries — of which he was valorously discreet — would have given him good cause to do so. Yet his professional dedication to others did not mean that, my brother's puerile moodiness aside, he judged others when they succumbed. As he pointed out, often it was the mind's unhealthiness that determined the body's. But there was no ill hard work or a few good whiskies wouldn't cure, as far as he was concerned).

Anyway (my father continued), he revealed to me that he'd racked his brains to work out how he'd gotten struck down. He'd always been a good chopper, he said, and the occasional splinter aside, he'd never had any accidents or serious injuries, but one day, he'd come across the biggest tree he'd ever seen up near the Hand Cave, out the back of Orangetrees. Cec told him the old-timers used to call it Colossus, the haughty way it held up the sky, its mottled hands veining the clouds. There were

stories the Aborigines had used it for corroborees, though with most of the Jindy Mob drowning in their own Dreamtime now down the Spit, who could say what secrets Colossus held? All the old folk were long dead, and those that remained had had the old ways scrubbed out of them in the Homes they were sent to for civilisation. But the old tree had gotten old and diseased, and it needed coming down, or else, who knew what damage it'd cause?

—The more you work with trees, he said quietly, the more you grow to respect 'em, and even come to love 'em. Every tree's different: where it's growin', how big it is, the surroundin' foliage, the way it leans into the shadows or reaches into the light. Just like people, I suppose, he laughed sadly. Or diseases, I added.

It took him three days to fell Colossus, and it was an exhausting job, requiring every trick in the book and most of the tools in the ute. And, just as he heard that strange, swollen silence that comes before a tree comes moaning down, he nicked himself on a knobbed branch running clear of the ancient trunk. He'd thought nothing of it, but a few days later the first warts had started to appear. I reassured him it was genetic, but it wasn't improbable that the ordinarily dormant infection had been activated by a soil-based pathogen.

It was all very well to infer the origins of the disease, and even the end, but such supposition wouldn't cure him now. I assured him I'd come see him every week on Wimboola rounds, at least to offer him some topical relief from the bark-scratchiness he suffered.

(Had I had the time and submitted my findings to *The Lancet*, I'd like to think that in addition to its taxonomic appellation — *papillomatic epidermodysplasia verruciformis* — 'Daphne Disease' might have caught on. It has a nice ring to it, don't you think? said my father, who despite his suspicion of mythology and disregard for poetry, still appreciated an apt allusion)

Apart from the epidermal foliage and the despondency, the patient was otherwise healthy — all vital signs reflecting the benefits of fresh air and hard work, despite the time he'd now spent idle amidst the anthesis of his hands and feet. But after the flowers in the ward had died and dried, after the casseroles and scones had been eaten, after the baking dishes and tea towels cleaned and returned, all he was left with were his own helpless, darkening thoughts.

His wife wasn't coping so well. She confided that apart from the strain of managing a much leaner budget since he'd stopped working and having to do everything for him, she was revulsed by the thick chaotic growth weeding out of her husband — and even if he hadn't been so blighted, He wasn't the same man, Doc. Where they'd once enjoyed all the fun and noise of a very active social life, he was too embarrassed by his condition to leave the house, and what with him being so helpless, she had to stay at home too. The lights and clatter of the Railway twinkling in the night or the occasional roar from the footy at home games just made him sadder as the once-immaculate lawn started to go to seed and the privet started to choke the rose beds.

But what is a man? His profession? His name? His actions? His choices? His associations? A collection of half-remembered memories and dreams? A set of organs or series of symptoms? An array of opinions, whether his own or others'? It's not my job to say: I only deal in the apprehensible facts, not conjecture.

Besides, he'd become more tree than man, covered in thick bark all over his limbs and trunk. His speech became muffled, and was soon no more than a sigh of breeze through the trees he'd once cut down. Poor Woody (as he was cruelly dubbed down the Railway) nodded mutely and helplessly as birds nested in his ligneous growths and butterflies flitted about him. His face was wooden but not expressionless, his eyes weeping with thick sappy tears.

But seeing how much he'd given to others in his family and community, it seemed unjust that they should have neglected him and his wife so.

So, after prescribing him more ointment and antibiotics and her a mild sedative to improve her mood, I marched down the Railway and called for silence. Not that I really needed to: a doctor in the Railway was like a unicorn in Matey's. Or a Jindy in Middle Pub. There was utterly surprised shoosh.

—Now, you lot, I said, trying to speak in their language. There's a bloke who's been a pillar of the community for years, a mate and rello who's always done his best for you all. I know what some of you call him, and though you think he can't hear what the wind carries up from the pub or the footy field, he knows. And if you were in the same way, would you want to be abandoned like that?

There was a bit of coughing, and I knew it wasn't croup.

— And here's the thing, I continued. Any of you could get what he's got. Now, don't worry, it's not contagious, but it's genetic — and given how many of you are related, it could very well happen to you. Now, you know if it was you — and I sincerely hope none of you have to suffer as he has — he'd be down your place in a flash, making sure you wanted for nothing. And I know if it'd happened in *my* town, well...

I spoke to them there then not as a doctor but as a man. And I'd like to think my speech had an effect on them for the same reason, at least if you count the number of drinks shouted me (I declined the whisky to the last; though I can't quite remember how many shandies were pressed on me that night)! Wimboola soon rallied round him and his wife, mowing the lawn, dropping over home-cooked meals, chipping in with the housework, passing the hat round for bits and pieces to keep them going. His house was as busy as his hospital bed had been.

But in that time, Woody had become even more woody, even more tree-like, until it seemed there wasn't much man left in him. The last time I saw him, he rustled that while he appreciated his family and neighbours' new consideration, their pity revulsed him more than their ridicule. He saw how apologetically they smiled, the way they averted their eyes, speaking slowly and loudly of the weather, that Ozymandian ghost leaning over his shoulder, while they fiddled with their teaspoons.

Don't know how he did it, given how hard it was for him to move, but he somehow shuffled via the creek to the footy ground. He didn't quite make it — he'd gotten caught on the other bank in a stand of trees that had somehow survived the clearing of the rest of the paddock. He must have been too exhausted to turn back or go further, and when they finally found him a few days later, they couldn't move him: somehow, he'd ended up taking root.

They left him there, drinking rain and bathed in sunshine, bees drowsing in his branches, lovers carving their initials in him. All that would remain would be the primordial sound of the bush and his silenced hope, mouldering away into the mossy shadows, surrounded by the reproach of the very things he'd once loved destroying and had now come to resemble, abandoned by the pity of those whom he wished to resemble once more.

I suppose it is true that you often destroy the thing you love, and that you too can be destroyed by it too, or at least by the love of it (said my father unexpectedly stiltedly, as our mother watered the garden, silhouetted by the dying light.)

2.

MY BEST FRIEND CHARLIE HAD A TOW-HEAD AND PALE SKIN, DUSTED WITH freckles, as easily bruised as a pear's. In fact, if she wore moleskins in the back paddock at Orangetrees, I was afraid she might get lost in its high sandy waves of grass. Even now, I can't remember her face exactly. Unlike my father, I've taken a much greater interest in names, though I'm no good at them either. We lamented — well, Charlie did — that God had chosen to divide her family into two camps: good-looking and good personality, of which Charlie thought she was definitely in the latter, though I always thought her beautiful.

Charlie's elder sisters, Anne and Emily, went to an expensive boarding school in the Smoke, from which they'd return every holidays, titivating in snobby tones in front of the fireplace mirror about all the sorts of things (B&S balls and boys that played football) that we found embarrassing and confusing. *Tray joe-lee, so so-fist-icay-ted.*

Charlie would go there in the new year. I dreaded this: the unimaginable idea my bestest friend in the whole world would one day leave me here all alone, and even the big trees in our town wouldn't seem as welcoming or comforting without Charlie nestled in the shadow-dappled branches with me.

It was a troubling thought, for me and for Charlie, although I think she was getting more used to the idea than I was. It was as though, that last summer before she left, the whole sky had held its breath, and panting in the hot, still air, I tried to catch mine.

THERE WAS A LOT TO DO IN THE BACK PADDOCK. IN THE TALL SHIMMERING grass, near Calliope Creek, in a tall cool glen of gum trees and grevillea, there stood our secret castle, a small fist of rocks that stood hunched over in shadows and the thick crisp tang of gum leaves and loam. It was in this haunted place that Charlie and me would drink the shade and smell and coolness till it dripped down our chins, speaking of secret stuff. The stuff that could never be discussed in front of anybody else, especially grownups. Charlie and me were blood brothers — well, actually spit and

scab brothers, like off *Rawhide*, because she'd had a scab on her leg from where she'd fallen off the Castle, and I was too scared to cut my finger in case I got tetanus or Woody's *papillomatic epidermodysplasia verruciformis*. So I rubbed some spit into her scab, and promised her the next scab I got, she could rub some of her spit in mine. Secretly I hoped that she'd forget this pact and not take me up on it.

For all the flurry of unreal changes that swirled around us and through us and in us, the Secret Castle remained, for a while at least, the one unalterable fact. As often as we could, which was more and more often in that last summer, we'd head up to the back paddock with Jess the pie-bald old dog, and run with our hands outstretched through the feathers of long grass, not yet dry, like the colourless expanses closer to the road, where even the Patterson's Curse did not thrive.

Running as fast as we could, whooping and yelling, we'd reach the Castle, breathless, reverent, drinking in silence the cool shadows and the ancient, secret smells of the soil and eucalyptus. We'd walk around it, like lyrebirds beginning a mating dance, checking that the tablecloth walls and sheet roof were still in place, and that nobody had interfered with them.

We put little booby traps around the place, though when I visited the place where the Castle had once stood that last, sad time, they'd all fallen to pieces: they could never have trapped anybody or anything. I often wonder what might have happened if we'd come upon a possum or wallaby, caught by our slap-dash stick-pit, its life ebbing into the musty loam, and I'm glad we never did.

It was here we seemed most real, most grown-up: it was our own place, a space as wide as we could imagine it. Unlike the rest of the outside world, where we had to queue or keep quiet or get out of the way; where we were sent here and there, to the shops, to the corner, to our rooms, here, only here, we could do as we liked, say what we liked.

Nobody could tell us what to do or where to go, and we felt safe: not just from the actual slings and arrows of the outside world: the chalk Mr Bulpitt would ping our way — well, mostly mine — when we weren't paying attention; the stones Dean Moran and Shane Brownlow threw when we weren't looking; the punches and pinches and slaps and petty tortures of the playground we had to take without crying; but the threatened ones as well: the sinister looks of the hoons that my brother hung

about with in the gloom of the bus-stop; the prospect of next year when everything would be different.

We were masters of our domain, and we imagined ourselves, standing on the parapets of the Castle, as though we'd just discovered this country; and, like The Major, surveying the lie of the land, claimed it all as far as we could see. Funny how we just didn't see the homestead reclining at the foot of the hill, nor the smoke from town or the roofs of the old church hall and Middle Pub. We could imagine it erased, virgin territory, ours, as though nothing existed before we laid eyes on it.

We still played games when we were at the Castle: we were still children. All the old classics: hide-and-seek and French cricket; Cowboys and Indians, when we'd hold out against the marauding Comanche; Space Explorers, fighting off the vicious aliens; Pirates, digging up ancient treasure on a desert island under the stubborn roots of the old ghost gums in the glen. It's only now I wonder, walking past a school at play lunch, how the rules of playground games were ever passed down when the rules then seemed so secret.

We tried to act normally, as though things hadn't changed, wouldn't change, even if she did go — we were scab and spit brothers, after all — but everything took on that strangely unreal air, as though the volume and colour had been turned up too high on the television. We laughed a little too quickly, too eagerly, too loudly; we seemed more polite to each other than we'd ever needed to be before; everything we did seemed to say 'this is the fourteenth-last time we'll'... her leaving lurking in the silent spaces between our normal chatter.

I knew that it wouldn't be the same after she left, even though I wanted it to stay this way forever, even as I knew it couldn't. I knew when she came back from the city next holidays — it may as well have been next century! — we wouldn't be sitting in the dirt of the Castle, wiping our noses on our sleeves, flicking ants at each other, hoarding gum leaves in holes we'd dug in secret places.

She'd change, and although I didn't want her to, I didn't want to, I knew I'd have to change too, to keep up. I didn't want to get out of shorts and moleskins, I didn't want to grow up, I didn't want to turn into the sullen, angry curdle of Hormones and silence my brother had become. I just wanted to stay in the protective cool of the glen and the secret shadows of the Castle forever. With Charlie. Ever and ever.

Although we'd sometimes fought when we were younger, wrestling and pinching till one of us cried (and the other, suddenly fearful of trouble on our return, promising lollies and free punches till the other stopped grizzling and promised not to dob), that last summer, I more and more let Charlie choose the game, to be whoever she wanted to be. I was happy to be the Indian if it meant we got to play, and I put all my heart into being the best Indian ever.

Rather than the pathetic sullen efforts of the past, where I'd wanly pat my hand over my mouth while I looked at the ground and waited for it to be over, now I threw myself into it. My knees touched my chest as I did the war dance, reverently intoning the *oo-ma-mum-ma-oo-ma-mum-ma* chant I'd heard on *Rawhide*.

Even Charlie seemed impressed from her hiding place inside her covered wagon. I crept with preternatural stealth and cunning through the woods, stopping at places to mysteriously put my ear to the ground, and I whooped with furious anger as I made my assault on Charlie's covered wagon, writhing in agony when she shot me.

And I kept doing it, over and over, getting shot every time, just to hear her laugh as she killed me: each bullet, it felt, sticking a little deeper in the quick of my heart. If that wasn't what love, *real* love, really was, what was?

At the Secret Castle, Charlie and me had hung table cloths and old sheets all around, supported by rough stick structures that then, had a perfectly plausible and serious purpose; but when I tried to recall them later, seemed fragile and silly in my imperfect memory.

Often, in our Secret Castle, we'd forget fleeting time; soon, cold shadows would lean dark and ominous across the glen, and we'd scamper back to the warmth and safety of the homestead, where the sofas were deep and comfy and we could wrap ourselves in the glow of the telly.

Once, we stayed up the Secret Castle too long, and it got dark too quickly, and in the darkness, lost and petrified, we stumbled back to what we thought was the track running diagonally across the back paddock, but in reality was the fire trail leading to the Willetts' property; and we'd have kept going, more and more disoriented and despairing, until we saw Mr Fulbright in the old Landcruiser, driving along quite distractedly, with Cec in the back tray, spotlighting us like delinquent rabbits.

Although we got in quite a deal of trouble that night, and even though they asked us where we had been, and even though we had been terrified out of our wits by the vast blackness of that night, we never said anything to the grownups as to where we'd been or what we'd been doing (Nowhere, mum, nuthin', we got lost) for to say anything would have been to empty the still and silent sacredness and secretness of that place.

OUR TOWN WASN'T BIG LIKE BORRIGAL. EVERYBODY KNEW EVERYBODY ELSE, and everybody else's business, though nobody said anything. Nobody said anything when Mrs Briskett, the Butcher's wife, ran off with the bank book and a Wimboola shearer: but then nobody was that surprised. Everybody must have noticed the way she'd kept inside out the back of the shop; how the radio or the bone-saw got turned on at strange hours after Middle Pub had closed; why she fell so often out of bed, into doors, down stairs, out the back of the shop. Nobody knew if he beat the kids, though if he did and they did, they didn't say.

Nobody said anything: everybody smiled nervously, looked through our brows at thin air, at our dusty shoes, at nothing: even the contusions that must have stared back accusingly at us all. Everybody still queued up on Saturday morning for our Sunday roasts, making polite, cheery chit-chat with Mr Briskett as he trimmed the dripping-fat with his cruel knife, while Mrs Briskett, her head down to hide the shiner, said nothing along with the rest of us.

Still, nobody was much surprised that the same shiny-pated man who took so much pride in the way his chops were arranged in symmetrical patterns in the shop window, who'd keep the door open for our mother and all the other ladies, who'd carry their bags, bleeding through the paper, to the very boot of the car, was the same man whose fists, greasy and angry, would beat flesh and blood with choppy knuckles, like one of those horrible toothy tenderisers you don't see much any more.

The only thing that surprised everybody was that Mrs Briskett had managed to get away from her tormentor, let alone get away with it and the shearer and the bank book—and, it seemed, from occasional postcards to her children from wherever she and the shearer happened to be, deliriously happy, if somewhat worried whether the

kids were eating their veg (according to Matey, who couldn't help catching a glimpse as he sorted the post).

My father later said that he'd asked Mrs Briskett what had happened, but she'd refused to say. What could he do, given his commitment to his professional ethics and patient confidentiality?

There's nothing worse, he later said, possibly in reference to the Briskett case, than anger in the kitchen. All those appliances and knives. Our mother, struck down with her nerves again, did not get the joke, even when he added by way of mollification, Or the operating theatre, either.

THEN SUMMER FINALLY ARRIVED, DRENCHED IN STICKINESS AND THE ENDLESS racketing of cicadas throbbing in the shimmering haze. Days unfolded like freshly laundered sheets, redolent with the smell of drying grass, before they eventually began to cloy with an inescapable clinginess, full of hot breaths and sticky-backed drowsiness. Dry as a dead dingo's donger, as they'd say down Doon Pub.

It was difficult to stay awake in the afternoons, especially during maths, looking out over the brittle stubble of yellow grass in the playground outside. Mr Bulpitt stung me back to consciousness with a well-aimed stub of chalk, though I always got the sums wrong anyway.

You were always thirsty. No amount of cordial could slake the dustiness in your throat. It was too hot some days to run, or climb trees, or even talk: everybody and everything flopped around listlessly, as though their bones had melted into the shining afternoon.

At night, not even the somnambulant droning of the electric fan could soothe you to sleep; your dreams were filled with pasty limbs, insistently knotting themselves around you.

Sometimes, if we were lucky, a desultory vinegar breeze would flap in raggedly off the lake, bringing some meagre relief, but unless we could go swimming, we'd lie panting in the gummy shadows of sympathetic trees, our minds blank with the unyielding heat, as we tried to suck the rapidly puddling red cordial ice-blocks our mother made for us as they trickled in sticky rivulets down our mouths and arms.

The only places we could splash away the heat were the Borrigal pool if we were really desperate; the beach, which was too far away by foot; and the Deception River, which dwindled from its origin somewhere high in the hills into the dismal creek bed where the Jindy Mob camped noisily.

You couldn't swim in the lake: it was all breadth and no depth and infested with weeds and sea-lice. And the pool, though safe, watched over by the District swimming champ, Kevin Dooley and subject to strict rules of admission (which included the unspoken rule No abos allowed!) was no-go too, unless you were a little, happy to paddle in the piss-warm wading pool. The billabong was the preferred option, not only because there were no grown-ups there, but because it was dangerous. The billabong was cold and deep; it had flesh to it. Sometimes, you might be too afraid of the cold to jump straight in, and you could dangle your toes in the shallow green water, rub the soft undersides of your feet on the smooth slippery mossy rocks, green and cool.

If you jumped straight in off the capricious swinging rope into the water, you'd float straight back up, struggle and bundle yourself amongst the bubbles to reach the top, because you couldn't see in the water, thick and green like cicada blood.

I was afraid of jumping in the billabong like that, afraid of not touching the bottom, of unseen fingers grasping me in the murkiness, unlike the public pool, where you could see the bottom. I hated the uncertainty of floating into nothing, of having to trust the billabong like that. I'd jump in and splash around, keeping my head above the water while I paddled furiously to the bank, while everybody else bombed around me.

But the billabong was dangerous; and if you had any respect at all, if you wanted any, you'd only swim there.

Charlie was never afraid of anything; sometimes, I'd just sit on the rocks and watch her and Angus Day jump and shout and collide and bump, do all the things I secretly wished I could. I'm not saying I was a sook or anything like that — eventually, I jumped and crashed and splashed too — but I was never completely sure of that billabong, its ancient tenebrous darkness.

—Stop pikin', ya wuss! she'd cry, a streamer of joy rippling the water, splashing through the trees, a bright silver string of happiness and fearlessness.

There was an old Jindy story about the river; about a girl who was carried away by the Yowie that lived in the billabong. At the last moment, she turned herself into a breeze, and when it suddenly got cold after a swim — even if the sun was still shining — you knew her spirit was watching you behind the shivering trees.

Case History No. 3: Hyperotic Tergo-Collitic Cochleitis

ONCE THERE WAS A WOMAN (*MY FATHER BEGAN, HIS FINGER RINGING HIS TUMBLER IN that sonorous way*) who grew an ear in the back of her neck. And she already had the other two on either side of her head.

She presented complaining of acute pain in her neck and throat, dizziness and chronic sleeplessness from what appeared to be a cyst or goitre on the back of her neck which wept a thick, viscous mucus and would start to ring (much as this tumbler does) whenever she raised her voice or her right arm.

—It just won't do, Doctor, she said, her lips prim, as she fingered the clasp of her purse, opening and closing it, opening and closing it. Especially given her position in the District: President of the Country Women's Association, Treasurer of the Borrival Women's Bowls Association, Secretary of the Borrival Race Club Women's Auxiliary, Honorary Chairman (here, as always, she stuck to protocol) of the Borrival High Parents' and Teachers' Association and more. She was a founding board member of the Borrival Lionesses' Club and Bagheera in the 2nd Borrival Scouts.

Though she was famous for her lamingtons, which were devoured at every drive, she had her fingers in a lot of Borrival pies, and had her eyes on bigger things. Given her high standing in the community, she was planning to run in the local elections — mainly, she said, to remove the unsightly blot the Jindy Mob had smeared over what should have been the District's biggest tourist attraction down Le Grande Rue Fulbright.

But she could hardly open fêtes and the like with her neck leaking and ringing, now, could she?

Although I initially tried draining the cyst, treatment was unsuccessful and I ordered further tests, including an ultrasound at the Base Hospital. We'd just gotten the machine and Sister Gloria Munday was dying to try it out.

The results came back suggesting the possibility of a cochlea and eardrum in the back of her head. In all my long and distinguished career, I'd never seen anything like it. Sometimes patients present with additional organs or bones, usually a case of

Parasitic Twin Syndrome. Sometimes people have been known to grow a new set of teeth in their nineties. But never the spontaneous gestation of a new ear!

Like many who think themselves important, she put on an air of being so busy she could not listen to the end of anybody else's sentence, including mine. You got the impression she was only waiting for you to finish speaking so she could continue pronouncing on her favourite subject.

Stop interrupting! (he said to my brother, muttering something we couldn't quite hear).

— Yes, yes, yes, Doctor, she said as she looked in her diary. Well, I've got the lamington judging at the Show and the Black and White Ball at the Racecourse after that, after which I plan on announcing my candidature in time for the polls, so you'll have to do something before —

As I tried to explain, her condition was so unprecedented, treatment could be complicated. Before we considered anything, we had to treat what looked like a serious middle ear infection (with elements of Meniere's Syndrome) with drops, regular syringing and a course each of diuretics and motion sickness pills to stop the dizziness. Then we could discuss the next course of action (though what that was then, I didn't have the faintest yet). But I'm not sure if she listened to my instructions as carefully as she should, bustling out to her next Committee meeting.

It's funny, isn't it (he chuckled)? A patient with anotia can suffer with no ears, but a person with hyperotia suffers just as much. An extra finger in the polydactyl is just as much, if not more, of an impediment than having one less (he said to my brother, glowering in the shadows, echoing his much repeated maxim, Everything in Moderation — apart from smoking, that disgusting habit).

She returned in great distress a few weeks later. It wasn't just that the diuretics were making her pass water all the time; with the infection cleared up, she heard everything. Everything. The unkind words, the malicious gossip, how up herself people thought her. Lady Muck, she was called — and worse, which of course, I won't repeat here (said my father, as ever valorously discreet).

At first, she was outraged: how very dare they! But after a few futile confrontations — one in which the other party smilingly denied everything and another furiously admonished her for eavesdropping — she soon became

embarrassed, then despondent, then frightened. She started hearing voices speaking even when there was nobody else there. Not just the ones she imagined, down the Women's Auxiliary or the Bowls Club, as she sat rocking in her front room, furtively peeking out the lace curtains.

No: There were *other* voices, Doctor, she said, her eyes red and flickering. Others. Rushing in towards me and through me. Flying all around and over and inside me. The names! The cries! The moaning yawning echoes! Make them stop! Make them stop! Oh, Doc, *please* make them stop.

They didn't speak any language she knew, she couldn't understand them, but the bad dreams and awful secrets they filled her up with frightened her. She hadn't slept a wink for days, she who'd slept the deep, sound sleep of the self-satisfied for years. She'd become a cracked cup and so, with some scientific regret on my part, we decided on fixing her handle. We ended up sewing the ear up.

Had I had the time to submit my findings to *The Lancet*, I'd have called the infection 'hyperotic tergo-collitic cochleitis.' Or 'Third Ear Syndrome' for the layman (he said, stifling just a little remaining scientific regret).

We have two ears and one mouth for a reason, and nobody needs their ears — and their eyes — more than a doctor. But I suppose you can be more deaf with three ears than with none at all. Even the two you have. Are you even *listening*? (he said pointedly as my brother feigned obliviousness, the silence from the kitchen deafening).

IT REFLECTED MY FATHER'S GENEROSITY THAT ALTHOUGH HE GENERALLY frowned on the frivolities of television (or 'The Idiot Box' as he'd snort) — Rots Your Brain, Gives You Square Eyes, Don't Stand So Close, You'll Go Sterile! — and, judging by my brother's taste at least, found Whatever it is they call music nowadays an Awful din! and Whoever it is supposedly 'playing' it, are they Arthur or Martha? outrageous and effete, he allowed my brother to watch *Countdown* on Sunday with our mother before the news and case histories; although as this was contingent on my brother eating all his dinner and finishing all his homework (or even being home when he was meant to), our mother ended up watching it on her own for much of that summer

(the way she did that show that only Skinny Goodrich had ever seen, *Number 96*, long after we were meant to be asleep, and when our father was out on calls, its prurient glow throbbing down the corridor).

—I've heard of a boy named Sue, he'd say, shaking his head as we retreated to the verandah, but what kind of name is *Molly* for a man?

My brother and our mother both especially loved one performer, who from year to year appeared under yet another extravagant but perplexing alias. Assuming you're of my vintage (or struck by the nostalgia only those who've never lived in a particular past can affect) you may remember him, going by his various outlandish stage names: Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, Thin White Duke, David Yowie. And not one sensible handle between them, my father would mutter with a wry grin as he poured the first *digestif* of the evening.

Like my father, I couldn't see or hear the appeal, unlike *The Black and White Minstrel Show* or *Love Thy Neighbour* or *Doctor in the House* or *It Ain't Half Hot, Mum!*, which followed, and which my father kindly allowed me to watch, if I'd done all my chores. But David Yowie extremely excited my brother and our mother, titivating something about golden ears (though I may have misheard). And it seemed, as my father and I sat in the twittering evenfall, the serenity frequently disturbed by lusty whoops or some grating discordance from the lounge room, that, at least on the verandah, it was getting harder in that questionable, crepuscular half-light to see where anything was meant to be: what was inside and who was on the outside, and how they fitted together, if at all, like those cacophonous squawks and wrong notes on that record my brother and our mother played over and over and over again until it was scratched beyond repair, their own golden ears fuzzy and tarnished to deafness.

3.

FOR ALL HER OTHER CRAZES AND PHASES, OUR MOTHER WAS AN EXCELLENT COOK. She could roast, marinade, baste, sauté, soufflé, stew, simmer, soak; she could stir, whip, blend, fold; she could boil, fry or grill. She could julienne raw vegetables (or ‘crudités’ to the sophisticated readers of *The Australian Women’s Weekly*) thirteen different ways, from your basic grass-blade strip; through your Blue Phoenix carrot or radish rose; to the excruciatingly difficult and flimsy triple-folded Viennese crenulation, which involved three axes and two different knots.

—The triple somersault of veggie yart, Auntie Flo would cluck admiringly.

She once did the entire Scout knot guide in celery — all those bows and hitches, surgeon’s ligatures and cat’s paws, just for a diversion. Even my father, a mean and inventive napkin folder himself, was as impressed with her sheep-shank as by her slow-braised lamb shanks.

Unlike my father, whose professional dedication to the facts, pure and simple, meant he only read medical textbooks and journals or the newspaper, our mother’s bookshelves were filled with the long, romantic Russian novels that kept her locked up in her room all day, and all sorts of cookbooks which she’d refer to, from ancient tomes like *the Compleat Indian Housekeeper and Cook* to the latest shiny *Family Circle* or *Good Housekeeping*, glistening with glaze cherries and glazed hams. You could travel the world through the pages of *The Complete Asian Cookbook* or *French Provincial Cooking*, even if, like my father, I preferred more familiar shores.

Because of her enthusiasm for different ‘cuisines,’ as she called them, we could end up with spring rolls and spaghetti marinara; chicken chow-mein and chips; haggis and hummus. Company was always as perplexed by the sweet and sour cornucopia in front of them as delighted after, patting their pinguid lips with contented napkins, mopping up every last dribble of gravy from their plates.

Not for us the edible monotony of most people in town, who’d have Sausages and Three Veg on Mondays; Lamb Cutlets and Three Veg on Tuesdays; Tuna Casserole on Wednesdays; Rabbit Stew on Thursdays; Fish Fingers and Mash on Fridays; Spag Bog on Saturdays; and a Noice Baked Tea on Sundays, with all the trimmings.

Sometimes fish and chips down Clifford's Boat Shed, or chop-suey down the Blue Phoenix, twice a year and on their birthday.

Not for us Vegemite and Coon or Devon and Tomato Sauce in our lunch bags: although we were the Doc's Children, and our (father's) status lent us some weight around town, it didn't cut the mustard in the playground, and we often had no takers for our lunch at swaps. Even Charlie would refuse, despite my efforts to sweeten the deal with a Caramello Koala which Matey may have dropped in my mixed bag that morning.

But then, who could blame her? We never knew what we'd find in our lunch bags, which, even though we were the Doctor's Children, we'd have to bring back every day, the grease-paper inside always neatly folded so it'd last to the end of the week — even though by then, it was as brittle and smattered as dry snakeskin, spattered with the remnants of our undesirable lunches.

And though other mothers would bake the usual lamingtons and Anzac bickies, our mother was famous for sweet little shell-shaped cakes, soft and lemony, already redolent of something I might have called *deja-vu*, though I didn't know the word then and cannot for the life of me remember the name of those little cakes now.

WHAT MOST DISTINGUISHED OUR MOTHER'S CULINARY ABILITY WAS THE WAY SHE expressed herself through cooking, even more so than her other crazes and phases like the painting or the pottery. Let alone speaking.

If she were in a good mood, then everything would sing with light and colour: it seemed as if the lamb had skipped to the abattoir with a joyous bleat, happy in the knowledge it — or some part of it — would end up in one of our mother's rhapsodic casseroles; that the peas and potatoes and even the irksome brussels sprouts had flung themselves at the farmer's hopper. Everything tasted of rainbow ice cream and fulfilment.

Those were good dinners, where every mouthful rang with laughter as I remember it, and it's only now, grown-up myself, that I wish I'd been big enough to ask for seconds, even thirds. Though I never had the maths, I wonder how many more portions of our mother's wonderful cooking I might have enjoyed, had I the stomach

for it. It was difficult then, even for the hungriest diner, to eat whatever she served without a little regret at its disappearance from the plate.

Nibbling on one of our mother's devils on horseback, a titbit of sparkling witty conversation — which I'd surreptitiously sneak while the grownups were distracted or my father would generously slip me, reminding me Not To Let Your Mother Know — was like having an imponderable question suddenly pop in your mouth, the bacon sizzling as the prune dissolved, an echo of sweetness.

Putting your fork into the pastry on one of her beef wellingtons, a dish of pride which she brought out for Company at Luncheon, was like piercing the flaky skin of a riddle as the gravy oozed sensually out, making you wistful that you'd had to break its pristine symmetry.

Plunging your spoon into a slice of one of her pavlovas, a celebration festooned with sparkling fruit and made with a meringue that disappeared in your mouth like words dancing on the tip of your tongue, was almost heart-breaking; but the rapture of eating it was consolation enough. Stomachs, no matter how full, always seemed to flutter with sighs after Luncheons.

And Lamb Chops and Gravy, whose aroma always reminds me of her, always just meant her unfathomable, unquestionable love.

BUT IF FOR ANY REASON OUR MOTHER WERE IN ONE OF HER MOODS, SHE'D LEAVE something out, so that, raising the spoon to your mouth, you'd realise something was missing, and therefore something was wrong, before it had even passed your lips.

Even then I was more aware of the meaning of silence than many of the words my parents and most grown-ups would use to cover it up. You'd see our mother up her end, lips taut and smarting as though she'd chewed a lemon, her knee angrily pressed against the lip of the table, waiting for someone — usually my father — to ask what was wrong. And hard as we tried, we couldn't help our own faces, with that something — whatever it was — missing, from gurning the same brittle expressions, ugly as half-sucked mango seeds.

However, if our mother was in an excessively good mood, perhaps having spent too much time in her room or down the beach that afternoon, then there'd be too much of everything: the sauce would be too oily or buttery; the meat too larded with herbs; the vegetables overcooked; black bits from the bottom of the casserole bloating us as we tried to hack our way through the tangled wilderness of our plates, her ecstatic face gleaming at the other end of the table. If our father tried to leaven that cloying euphoria by exhorting me to give the slick, mushy peas a chance, her laughter, too quick and too long, would rill across the table, making the backs of our necks shiver and the tines of our forks ring as we tried to gobble it down as fast as we could.

After trying to eat it all — and the inevitable seconds, which we couldn't refuse, our larynxes jammed against our oesophaguses — we'd trudge to the veranda for a case history, stretched out and spatchcocked, braving the mosquitoes who, sipping our blood, were delirious too, as we waited for our stomachs to return to normal size, the heavy weight of our mother's happiness slowly flapping away from us, clumsily taking wing in the sticky night.

Yet, despite her sometimes flighty moods and unpredictable habits, I'll always be grateful to our mother for instilling in us the proper eating habits and attitudes that determined our tastes in adulthood (although, perhaps, given my brother's own troubled journey to the remote, unsettled destination of his manhood, I should only discuss my own adult tastes and habits, although I must confess my delinquency there after she died. Still, you can't deny she tried).

Even now, I'm consumed by guilt if I even think about eating something sweet before elevenses, or cheese before bed: such was our mother's dietary discipline. Where other children, like Skinny Goodrich, were indulged with Frosties or Coco Pops for breakfast — or others, like Dean Moran or Snowy Shillingsworth didn't even bother, gobbling Samboys or snakes at the bus stop — our mother would insist on us eating porridge every day, to make us tall and regular.

(for all her psychic pretensions, when the tea leaves and astrology and numerology had her in their spell, our mother never liked us to second-guess what she'd cook up in those paper bags or on our dinner plates until we'd taken our first bites: we could only be sure of porridge for brekkie and Curry Night, every Wednesday, our father's favourite, which ended up the only certainty then...)

Unfortunately, although I can proudly say that I, at least, have always been regular — in every sense of the word — my brother and I were never blessed with our father's stature. We are still small like our mother. In fact, on reflection, my brother grew less and less like my father as he grew up, though this is no reflection at all on our mother's cooking.

BUT AS THAT RAVENOUS SUMMER DEVoured THE LAST OF SPRING, THROBBING with angry swarms of blowflies and crackling air, any trace of coolness burnt away, hanging over us, more disturbing than my brother's increasing waywardness or the heaviness that had started to drape itself over our house, or the thought of Charlie going away (in a time that seemed too soon to believe, as the days drip-dripped away with increasing speed) was the rumour that started crepitating about town: the spectre of the Something up in the hills.

Something was attacking stock on properties up in the hills. It couldn't have been anybody, let alone anybody we knew: nobody could imagine anybody doing such a thing, even Mr Briskett, with his cruel, glistering knife.

The wounds inflicted on the poor, lowing animals ranged from random scratches to vicious lacerations which ribboned out their insides in glittering streams: angry, visceral attacks: 'ripped the throats clean out of 'em,' a disturbed eyewitness was later quoted in *The Chronicle*. Even though squatters like Mr Fulbright had taken to keeping jackaroos to patrol the outside paddocks, or even bring mobs in closer to the stockyards, away from the lush pasture up in the hills, many mornings there'd be a poor, eviscerated animal, its shadow sodden, as the others bleated or moaned in terror around it.

It had been a dry winter, and nobody could remember the last time it had rained. There was word that the lambing hadn't gone as well as previous years, and, coupled with the fall in the wool price, things weren't looking good if summer proved, as it always did, to be even drier. Even the abattoir was on half-shifts and a skeleton crew.

And that was without the spectre of the Something up in the hills, preying on the thin, thirsty flocks, usually at night.

What seemed most odd was that it was clear the animals weren't being killed for food — if they had been, there'd be even less left of them. It appeared that whatever was doing it was doing it for fun.

Feral dogs and bloody foxes, muttered Mr Tuttle the Town Wowser to anybody who'd listen down Middle Pub — although as always nobody did.

—They kill for fun. Feral cats too. Bastards, the lotuv 'em.

Mr Horsley the Vet reminded him in what was reported was a heated discussion (mainly on 'old Reg's' part) outside Matey's (by Matey, to the mums in for their shopping the next day) that the slash marks and wounds didn't conform to those made by feral dogs, cats, foxes or wombats, and that neither feral dogs nor cats nor foxes could take down a full-grown steer. And no, there weren't mutant monster foxes up in 'them thar hills' either (the exact expression faithfully reported by Matey that morning, to the best of his recollection and with as little embellishment as necessary). Apparently Mr Tuttle seemed as much disappointed as annoyed by that, But then he was disappointed and annoyed by a lot, wasn't he? my father said later with a chuckle.

Even Mr Bulpitt, the Teacher, put in his two bits: A thylacine perhaps? he'd asked with an arched eyebrow down Middle Pub, but given how far north we were, he was probably just riling Mr Tuttle, which, for Mr Bulpitt to join in, proved what easy sport it was.

Dingoes had long since disappeared from the District, when the abos had all died out or departed to drink on the ragged ends of the dried-up creek bed down the Spit.

Some kids at school made out it could've been the Yowie that lived under the billabong, stirred from its hibernation by the heavy heat. The Yowie was indescribable: some said it was like a great snake, like the Rainbow Serpent from the Dreamtime, but uglier and crankier. Others said it looked like a troll, with damp green fur and nasty horns. Some wags said it looked like a bunyip.

What's that look like, then? Aw, a yowie...

There were other even less credible theories put forward by various people (if you can believe that), but the one which gained the most credence, put forward on the front page of *The Chronicle*, was that it must be some kind of big cat, possibly

escaped from the circus. But there hadn't been a circus in our District for ages, so it must have come from another far-away place, even further away than Gidgeree.

This idea took hold when Cec, the Fulbrights' property manager (Salt of the earth, my father would say with a fond smile and shake of the head) said he'd seen something in the back paddock, up near the stand of trees where our Secret Castle stood.

He couldn't quite make it out, and it seemed to move very fast, and he thought he could make out something glittering, shining with cruel eyes in the shadows, which seemed to grow colder and darker as he got closer. Unfortunately, he'd left his shotgun in the ute, and by the time he'd gone back to get it, the shadow had passed.

Cec did get a few drinks bought for him down the pub, though Mr Tuttle stuck to his conviction it was foxes. Or feral dogs. Or cats.

—Or wombats? said Mr Bulpitt to almost universal hilarity — Mr Tuttle muttering darkly under the laughter. As Mr Chislewitt the Bank Manager down Top Pub observed, Reg likes bein' right, 'specially as he isn't mosta the time anyway.

IS THE PANTHER SPOTTED? ASKED *THE CHRONICLE*, AND BY THE TIME THAT headline had splashed across the front page, it was clear to many that the shadow had taken on a distinct and troubling reality, even more so for being printed, with lengthy and breathless conjecture in *The Chronicle* about the origins, size and species of the shadow (all leading, of course, to the Alleged Panther. Even those like my father who discounted out of hand the Yowie or mutant fox theories couldn't as easily explain what Cec had almost seen. He wasn't one for exaggeration, old Cec — he wasn't much for talking.

There were shouted offers by men roused down Middle Pub to hunt it down, but luckily, this enthusiasm was cooled by Constable Hudson, who saw (quite reasonably, my father added) more trouble in a mob of drunk men with shotguns running around at night in the hills, than an 'alleged panther' attacking a few sheep or cattle, no matter how horrific the damage done.

Suddenly, despite all the routine comforts and intimacy of our small town, where nobody locked their doors at night, and everybody knew everybody else's business, that we were a small outpost of civilised safety in a wilderness of danger: all around us, hungry mouths riddled with teeth and stingers, bloodthirsty creatures swarming the soundless shadows of the bush and the cold depths of the sea and river.

The Yowie; drop-bears; sea-lice; magpies; snakes; spiders; bull-ants; feral dogs, cats and pigs; bluebottles — flies and jellyfish; cicadas, especially Black Princes; blue-ringed octopi; sharks; moths (but not butterflies); cockroaches; electric eels; Dean Moran (but not Shane Brownlow); the dark; ghosts; vampires; werewolves; goblins; everything imaginable and everything that wasn't; and now the Alleged Panther, which was even more frightening because it seemed the most real. Cec had seen it, and the more everybody talked and talked and talked about it, the bigger and fiercer and *realer* it became.

The spectre of the Alleged Panther hung over us all, carried on a vinegary sea of whispers and hot nightmares, making the noise in the trees heavy with foreboding, with no hope of rain.

Everybody knew somebody who knew somebody who'd seen it — but then, that was the way it was in our town. Everybody knew somebody who knew somebody. Dean Moran, of course, reckoned he'd seen it with his own eyes, though he had no proof, wouldn't tell anybody where in case there was a reward posted.

— Yew callin' me a liar? he'd say, his fist tightening to give you a dead-arm if he thought you did. Then giving it to you anyway, just for the hell of it, while Shane Brownlow snickered behind him.

Well, *I* did, though I was too afraid of the consequences to tell him. He'd just as soon knuckle you as look at you, and perhaps as a result of my brother's own random cruelties, I was painfully aware of the result of 'cheek.'

Rubbing the knot out of my arm, I waited for the aching bruise to come, which would bloom florid, painfully yellow at the edges. But though it hurt, I'd always return to touching it, savouring that sweet metallic tingle as I brushed my hand against it, again and again.

And the Alleged Panther, along with a good many other things that frightened me, was like one of those tender Moran bruises. I kept trying to put the Alleged Panther

(and those good many other things) out of my mind, but as I learnt to my distress, then and later, telling yourself not to think of something only makes you think of it more.

Face Your Fears, my father always liked to say. Get Back on the Horse. But alas, I was never that brave: I was too much of a scaredy-cat, a chicken — and horses terrified me anyway. But my mind's eye couldn't *not* look either, returning again and again to the Alleged Panther (and everything else), till the pain became almost unbearable.

I looked at Charlie, looking at Angus Day scoring another six. The ball arched in a swooping line, bisecting the air, a clean-sweeping parabola, landing with a satisfying shudder on the shelter sheds. Applause.

What did she think?

— 'Bout what? she said dreamily.

The Panther up in the hills —

— Well, I dunno. Yew scareda goin'?

I shook my head. Of course I was, though I could never tell her. And though I was so terrified of the Panther I checked under my bed every night before I went to sleep, I was more terrified we'd never get one last go up there before Charlie left. It was like being tossed and torn between a drowning rip and a swallowing whirlpool. But whichever it was, being caught by either without Charlie was the scariest thing of all to imagine.

Case History No. 4: Quasi-Ischiopagic Conjoined Identical Twin **Corsican Syndromatic Limerence**

ONCE THERE WERE TWO BROTHERS (MY FATHER BEGAN, POURING HIMSELF A rare but generous double) — Siamese twins they were called in those days, though of course, the correct term is ‘quasi-ischiopagic conjoined identical twins’ — afflicted with a plethora of problems, the least of which was that they were conjoined at the rectum. It’s not *that* funny (he added as my brother snickered in the shadows).

Anyway, it was the least of their problems, because although at the time they were suffering from diarrhoea, and this involved a certain amount of skill in the administration of medication (he noted with only a little justified professional pride), their real problem was that they were both in love with the same girl.

She used to walk past their house every morning on the way to work. Although they didn’t know anything about her and were too shy to approach her — no doubt due to embarrassment about their deformity — each somehow both became convinced the *other* was the reason they’d never have the opportunity meeting her. This led to quarrelling and fractiousness, which they’d never experienced before.

It’s been noted in some leading medical journals like *The Lancet* that there’s some form of empathic telepathy between extraordinarily close individuals, particularly identical twins, called colloquially Corsican [Brother] Syndrome, in which each can perceive the same sensations and sicknesses, even hear and read each other’s thoughts or feel the same emotions.

And there were no closer than these two, even if they didn’t share the same heart: they had a common pelvis, gastro-intestinal tract, blood supply — and of course, rectum (stop laughing). Given the relatively more primitive standard of medical technology at the time, it would have been not only quite difficult but extremely hazardous to attempt a separation. Even now it’s tricky, especially where the blood supply’s concerned.

The diarrhoea, physical connection and technical impediments aside, it was my professional opinion that, given their preternatural emotional attachment — which some new-fangled psychologists might call ‘co-dependent,’ though I think the correct scientific term would be ‘symbiotic’ — even if we could surmount the surgical

obstacles to separation, the subsequent stress of post-partial trauma might prove fatal. These were, after all, people unused to being individuals, and there have been cases documented in the literature of separated conjoined twins pining for the loss of that physical connection even as they continued to live together, with each dying within hours of the other, not long after detachment.

So you can imagine how it must have been like for these two. Their mother, at her wits' end, reported they spoke — if they spoke at all — in a strange guttural language of their own, unpronounceable grunts of gnashing and groaning. Why would they bother with complete sentences when they already knew what the other was thinking?

It had gone beyond griping, though. For all their new acrimony, they were prevented from coming to actual blows: it would have required almost impossible dexterity and flexibility beyond them, limping about like the tail-end of a three-legged race.

So they bumped about the house in tighter and tighter vicious little circles, sweating and flailing and contorting, yelling and screaming, reading each other's minds and tearing out each other's thoughts in clumps and bloody handfuls of hair until they collapsed in a heaving, exhausted heap.

Their mother, a good sort who'd done her best since their father cleared out not long after their birth, locked them in their room until they'd calmed down, to preserve what was left of her furniture, and it might have continued clumsily and noisily without much physical harm at least, until the night one of them — the elder by a second or two — pulled out a knife he'd secreted as his brother was sleeping. Don't ask me how he managed it, given how close they were — I'm only concerned here with the facts of the case, not any psychoanalytic supposition here.

(and it was true: as a scientific, rather than philosophical man, my father was only interested in the facts, pure and simple. No need for embellishment when the facts will do, my father always said; a saying he often followed with one of his favourite maxims: *Never Make The Mistake Of Theorising Before You Have All The Data*. Inevitably, you'll twist facts to suit prognoses, instead of prognoses to suit facts. And besides, life is infinitely stranger than anything the mind of man could ever invent)

But it was entirely unexpected, as they'd been on a liquid diet — an unforeseen reaction to the anti-motility agents I'd prescribed had rendered them constipated, so they'd been on a liquid diet, eating mashed fruit with spoons and straws.

While his brother slept fitfully, no doubt due to the fibre and rising bile, the other, under cover of darkness and blind rage, hacked away at their rectal link until they were only joined by a single, throbbing vein. The other woke up in a painful daze of severe hypovolaemic shock and died. I'm not conjecturing here what may or may not have been said — after all, I wasn't in the room — but the killer, obviously overcome with grief, remorse and quite possibly fear, cut the vein and bled to death as well. When their mother came in in the morning with their puréed pears, the whole room was splashed from floor to ceiling with thick black blood and half-formed faecal matter.

(did my brother cough something about bull dust? Or worse? Did my father hear? If so, he didn't mention it; if not, lucky for my brother)

You can't imagine the indescribably gut-wrenching smell of that room, (my father said with a black look on his face). Unless you've been into *his* room (he said with a chuckle, nodding at my brother).

The ultimate irony was that the girl that they were so destructively in love with never found out about their all-consuming unrequited love for her. She ended up marrying (I think it was) Michael Willett over at Wimboola. I delivered her first baby — difficult birth, that one was.

(my father wasn't a man prone to sensationalism, and I must apologise for the use of strong language and lurid details — try as I might, I feel though I may sometimes capture some of the spirit of his stories, I often can only capture his voice as I remember it.

My brother, now more and more often unbridled by the Hormones, took to much needless and puerile commentary on my father's case histories. My father, while not a philosophical man, and devoted to the facts, pure and simple, would never twist any observation he made of the patients he treated and their individual conditions to fit a presupposition about others. After all, as he was fond of pointing out, All Generalisations Are Dangerous, In Medicine As In Life — Even This One. Something many writers would do well to note).

4.

IT WAS ABOUT THEN, THAT LONG SUMMER OF HIS DISCONTENT, THAT MY brother stopped singing. When he was a tyke, he'd always sung little tuneless tunes that meant nothing to anybody but him, his high boyish voice clear and bright, like wind-chimes hung on a cool verandah. But though his voice didn't change as awkwardly as other boys whose voices already pitched and lurched between boyishness and manhood, it suddenly became deeper and colder, a symphony of silence.

It was still beautiful to hear, and I remember listening to him singing at Carols by Candlelight the year before, *Silent Night* swelling through us, a sweet sweeping tide of sound...

Even my father was proud of him that night. This isn't to say my father wasn't proud of us both, but that their relationship had become so fraught by the end of that summer that they barely acknowledged each other, even at the dining table, much less on the verandah. In the end, it was just me who'd listen to my father's case histories, while our mother and my brother were who knew where doing who knew what with who knew who.

I remember sitting next to my parents at those second-last Carols. I remember my brother seemed infinitesimal on the stage, drowned and awash in lights which made him look even more skinny, even more translucent. When he started to sing, I remember a hush went over everybody in the old church hall. I remember looking at my parents in the darkness, my father tall with pride, and our mother crying, mouthing the words. His voice engulfed you like a swirl of deep ocean water: dark and mysterious and brooding, a glissando of foam and salt, the whorling wind flecking crests of melody, like silver, silky ribbons, lustrous and stirring, calling to reefs and rocks within you, to the uncharted islands and merry-go-rounds in the sea at the edge of your heart's horizons... Somehow he made something as wussy as singing sound like something beautiful.

When he was younger, and my father had had a few more drinks than usual, he'd get my brother up and get him to sing, especially in Company. That was when my brother knew better than to be rebellious — though I suppose he was, like me, much smaller than too.

I remember lying in the dark of our bedroom — we still shared then, before his Hormones got him the sunroom — listening to the tinkle of grown-up laughter and chit-chat, until a silence fell over the lounge room and my brother's voice seeped and sparkled clear and sweet into all the corners of the house, lighting them up with glistenings of joy. All except my bed, where I'd lie, growing slowly hotter and more resentful, wishing my father would, just once, come and wake *me* up to impress Company.

I HAVEN'T HEARD MY BROTHER'S VOICE FOR A LONG TIME. WISPS OF IT FLIT THROUGH me, like catsear hair on a windy day, and though I might grasp a note here and there, it's soon lost.

DESPITE HIS PRIDE THAT LAST CAROLS NIGHT, MY FATHER, EVER A PRACTICAL MAN, always thought my brother's singing a childish peccadillo, a nice hobby that kept him out of trouble; but as my brother got older and more rebellious, he came to regard it not just 'frivolous' but 'dangerously delusional.' But my brother soon stopped listening — to my father's stories, to my father, to us, to everybody, just as he stopped singing too, without anybody noticing until it was too late. I guess everybody was just too busy to have noticed.

It seems as if his voice simply just faded away, tuned out like an old broken radio; becoming fainter and fainter until nobody but dogs and dead people could hear it. In the end, he didn't even bother singing *Happy Birthday* at our mother's party that year: while everybody else chorused round the cake, he just mouthed the words into his chest.

He'd always been different to us. While we were both small like our mother, and I am dark like my father, he had blue eyes, while I shared our mother's. Recessive genes, my father said, though I didn't know what that meant. And sometimes it seemed he wasn't just from a different family, but from a different species, a different country, far far away, where they did everything differently — and sullenly.

Although he was, like me, small like our mother, he had prodigiously, preternaturally large feet, and had to be fitted with new shoes every few months. Often, his shoes barely had creases in them, barely had the smell of his toes in the tips, before he'd outgrown them and needed new ones from Jackson's General Stores in Borriral.

For a while my parents tried to beat his growth spurts and buy him shoes a size too big, to stuff with *The Chronicle* till he outgrew them, but eventually they were feeding daily headlines into the toes and heels: his feet just grew too fast.

I sometimes envied him his constant new shoes, though he confided (when he was still speaking) that all they brought him was grief: he was always tripping over them, his toes were riddled with corns and blisters.

We didn't associate much together in public, especially after he started knocking about with the hoons. Whenever I caught sight of him down the foetid shadows of the bus stop on the Borriral Road with Snowy Shillingsworth and the gang, he looked too small to be comfortable; his laugh tottering a little too high and raucous; his toughness as slovenly ironed on like one of those Aladdin Sane patches he'd stuck on his t-shirts, the wrinkles wearing the face away.

—Gawarn, he'd crow, as though he were shooing away a fly, Yer like a bad smell. Carntcher see I'm busy?

Snide snickers, something else I couldn't make out as I rode home, eyes streaming.

Once, after our mother had dropped us off at the Borriral Pool, my brother left me, holding the esky, while he went off with Snowy and the gang in Boyd Moran's Sandman panel van with the sticker that read *Don't bother knocking if this van's a-rocking* to Mystery Bay with a burnout out of the car park. There, so it was said, they'd surf and smoke and get up to all sorts of unimaginable mischief.

By the time I got home, reports had already beaten me and him of his going walkabout with the tough gang. But I did not — never ever did — dob on my brother, much as I resented him leaving me alone to hide in the shallow end from Dean Moran and Shane Brownlow's mocking laughter — even if their horsey bites were harder to ignore. Our town was too small to hide much anyway.

I remember that night my father having another quiet word to my brother in his study, followed by the inevitable. I've worked far too hard to make a solid reputation in this district and I will not have a little lout like you smoking it all away. I can't remember what else was said, but I think this, unfortunately, only strengthened his resolve to keep up the habit.

Can't say now whether it was his increasingly rebellious Hormones or knocking about with the hoons that stopped him singing: they'd have considered it wussy anyway. Something real men didn't do, unless they were roaring drunk. Sometimes you'd hear the shearers or prawnies or jackaroos tumbling out of Down Pub, braying lustily as they slurred half-remembered choruses from *Waltzing Matilda* or *Click Go the Shears* or if they were being cheeky, *The Pub with No Beer* (*There's nothing so lonesome, so dull or so drear/Than to stand at the bar of a pub with no beer... Well bloody go home then, ya ratbags! Big Kel's fierce wife Glennys would cry as she broomed them out the door*).

My mother would attribute it to his artistic temperament as the door slammed and Aunty Flo clucked solicitously. He was 'sensitive.'

Everybody knew what *that* meant, though such 'sensitivity' didn't explain how my brother could so enthusiastically torment me. Chinese burns, ear-rubs, dead-legs, arm-twists, nipple-cripples, thigh-slaps, towel-snaps, wedgies... my brother had ample amusements to keep his hands busy and me on my toes. And he seemed to have added even more to his repertoire since he'd started at Big School.

Still, though I always ended up crying, it was better than the silence that he threw around himself, when he couldn't even be bothered to look up or open his door, no matter how hard I tried to annoy him.

My father blamed it on the Hormones, at first. But soon whatever it was became angry, inchoate, unspeakably silent.

It seemed further than the bumpy bus ride he took to the Big School in Borrigal where I'd be going in the new year, once Charlie had left for boarding school; where stories filtered back to my father that my brother slouched truculently in the back with Snowy Shillingsworth and the other rowdies; and in our town of otherwise mostly open doors, where even our toilet door was always left unlocked (In The Event of

Emergency, my father advised), it seemed as brittle as his banged bedroom door, which he'd slam with even more force than our mother did hers from time to time.

Secrecy's The Same As Lying, my father would say, though never in front of our mother. Suppose that's where my brother got it from, always creeping about, saying nothing. Like my father, I never lied; just as like my brother, I never doxed; and apart from not divulging the confidences of the Secret Castle, I never hid anything: like most children, I was pretty much an open book. But strange, on reflection, how much like lying the telling and the not-telling both are.

LOOKING BACK NOW, THE QUESTION OF MY PARENTS EVER FALLING IN LOVE SEEMED almost as inconceivable as the myriad imponderabilities of it never even happening. As my father sometimes observed (after a whisky or three more than he may have normally indulged), Opposites Attract, and if the fervour of the attraction was related to the opposition, then there was no doubt that my parents should have been deeply, wildly mad about each other.

Unlike my father, ever professional and unfailingly practical, our mother nursed her own highly-strung artistic sensitivities as much as she excused my brother's.

We were always aware of her nerves, when she'd disappear to the dunes or retreat to her room with a Bex and a bang of her door. Sometimes, we'd catch the muffled strains of *I Am Woman*, which she'd play with more and more frequency and vehemency, thundering throughout the house, her voice smothered by the pillow.

If we were home, we'd have to creep around to avoid disturbing her, especially that summer, when everything seemed narrated by unsaid words. The Black Cat, my father called it, and we had to watch its unpredictable claws and vociferous hisses, as it rubbed its back upon the window panes, rubbing its muzzle on the window panes, licking its tongue into the corners of the long afternoon, lingering upon the pools of silence that dripped from the drains, slipping by the verandah, and making a sudden leap, and seeing it was suddenly a brittle summer night, curled once about her room, and fell asleep, sometimes for days.

Just as I often wondered where my father ever found the intellectual stimulation his brilliant mind must have craved, I often wondered too where our mother ever

found the creative outlet her ardent heart must have yearned for, in a town like ours, where ‘cultcher’ was limited to fillums at the Borrigal Astra; the annual Musical Society Gala (which, due to popular demand, was *Brigadoon* again); whatever she could root out down the old, dusty, half-empty Borrigal library; and the District Races.

It was a measure of my father’s relatively enlightened and liberal attitude to our mother’s Crazes and Phases (as he called them out of her hearing) that he allowed her to indulge them as much as she did. Her duties were no more onerous than any other housewife in our town: while my father was busy ministering and attending to his many patients’ many complaints, all she had to do was look after us and the house. Which, the Black Cat aside, she did mostly commendably. Her chores and errands done, she had all afternoon until we returned from school (and, sometimes even after) to express herself.

She’d been the understudy in a few Musical Society Galas, and she danced as she sang — to her own graceful rhythm and melody, especially as my father, for all his other accomplishments, was no dancer. Like my brother, she could sing, though unlike the silver ribbon of his voice, hers was a high, fine, tinselly flute, soft and tremulous, and so she never won the lead over Barb Hicks, the Canary of Wilga, down the Musical Society, for all her heartfelt passion.

Then there was the pottery, when she’d fling lumps of clay onto the wheel, fashioning them into lopsided bowls and fingerprinted vases, which she could display proudly in the trophy cabinet, given her children’s sad lack of contributions.

During her painting phase, she’d don pigment-speckled overalls. Her watercolours of the Spit and the dunes at Mystery Bay were hung on all the walls of the house, as well as a few family portraits. Trying to picture them now I see more of her in the frame than I do of myself or my brother and father: although I can grasp by the whisker of a nose, the vague outline of a cheekbone here, the sketch of a brow there in the splash of brushstrokes, our faces look oddly like hers, our eyes just as distant, our smiles just as wry and uncertain. Perhaps it was the echo of her voice she heard in my brother’s, and though, parties and Christmas carols aside, my father did not encourage his talent, our mother indulged him, just as his talent (before he stopped singing) inspired her own dreams, giving them their own resounding (albeit tuneless)

tune, which we heard more and more that summer, condensing on the net curtains as we crept past on such ever more frequent Black Cat afternoons.

OUR MOTHER, SPELLBOUND BY THE NUMBERS IN HER NUMEROLOGY PHASE, USED TO buy a lottery ticket every week, but although, according to her, the numbers never lied, she never won. But then, like me, she was pretty innumerable: only ever seeming to measure life in pinches and sprinkles, and time between Luncheons and trips to Borrival.

Unlike me now, our mother was more fascinated by the future than the past, reflected in her reluctance to discuss the past as much as she strove to divine the future. I suppose now, looking back, that discrepancy demonstrated her idiosyncrasies, when most grown-ups, as they got older, retreated to the past, unsettled by what lay waiting in the future. Just as I have, now.

Whenever our mother determined that a new divination methodology, like the tea leaves or palm reading or astrology, might offer the certainty she sought, she'd buy all the books, filling scraps of paper and old envelopes with numbers and scribblings out, trying to work out the cryptic meanings as she referred to the sun signs and charts, looking if not exactly seeing. And when her augured predictions failed to pass, she'd turn to something more scientific: the rest was humbug, honestly, she realised that now.

(It was all silly superstition, my father asserted, always valorous, always out of our mother's hearing. You may as well watch birds and wonder which way they'll go, he'd say over another *digestif*, as our mother stood in the garden, gazing at the sky, the clouds long stripped from the skin of the night, leaving the garden's shivering flesh exposed. So many stars in that far-flung swathe of murky milky way, unravelling in the heavens' dark arch; so many stars trying to out dance and outshine each other, leaving such little trace of light; my mother's yearning guttering in the ethereal gloaming of the blue moon)

Once, in her numerology phase, when I was much younger, she wrote out my full name, the name she only ever called me if I was in trouble, and digitally distilled it until it was one single 1, the number that represented me and my future. I watched

with singular attention and trepidation, terrified of what the result might be, as frightened and hopeful as I might be watching my father tap the thermometer or consult my chart.

Her small, erratic mouse-print hand scuttered across a scrap torn from the bottom of *The Chronicle*. It seemed as if nothing added up. She looked at me for some time, as though she were struggling to find the right numbers. Or words. She told me I'd be alright, in the end, she just knew it. But she didn't look so sure.

It didn't seem a very satisfactory answer at all, and if sciences such as astrology or graphology or iridology couldn't descry any reliable keys to the future, what hope was there?

Like the tea leaves and the palm reading and the astrology, the numerology only made the future seem more distant, more nebulous, more ungraspable, more dicey, more confusing than ever. Besides, *nobody* ever called me by my given name.

Case History No. 5: Somno-subluceate Puteulanic Morphitis

ONCE THERE WAS A WOMAN (MY FATHER BEGAN, ENTRANCED BY HIS WHISKY shimmering in the glassy twilight) who started to glow in her sleep, a phenomenon reported to me by her neighbours, kept up at night by the eerie glow from her bedroom.

Until the onset of her nocturnal glowing, she'd lived with her husband in a small house by the lake end of town, down the Long Jetty Boat Shed. By all accounts they were quiet, respectable people. They kept pretty much to themselves, inordinately happy with each other's company, either completing each other's sentences, or content in that completely silent communion that loving husbands and wives enjoy (he said quietly, recalling the Collective Silences).

(If those two requirements announced the quality and closeness of a couple's love, then my parents should have been deeply in love. I never heard them argue, but I never noticed many, if any, loving glances from my mother when my father, busy as he was, often in a rush to the next appointment, completed her sentences; and the silence that grew between them seemed susurrous with ominousness rather than eloquence. But my mother wasn't much for talking anyway, and my father, as his case histories still attest, was the eloquent one, and his repartee seemed to get even larger as the rapprochement between them got further and further away from them, from us all).

Then the husband was killed. As he mowed the lawn, the lawnmower reared up on its back wheels and mowed him down, flinging shreds of him all over the garden. If that wasn't tragic enough, it was laundry day. A week's worth of whites and sheets were sprayed red. Like anarchist paintings, like revolutionary banners. It looked like Red China.

(he paused for effect, while we tried to imagine that much blood... or that many broken plates)

I was called in to determine cause of death, which was pretty self-evident. But it sounds a little fatuous to write *Death by Lawn Mower* on the death certificate, and one had to be sensitive.

(it need not be further noted, though it should, that although he was a practical, rather than emotional man, my father was very sensitive to accommodating the needs and concerns of others, especially his patients')

I ended up registering *Death by Misadventure* out of regard for the lady, who was utterly bereft. There wasn't much of a burial, given there weren't many identifiable remains — so much of him being sprayed across the flower beds. There was a small memorial at the church, to which few people came, given they didn't have a very wide circle of friends in town, mostly kept to themselves.

She later doused the mower with petrol on the front lawn, perturbing many of the neighbours. A lot of him stayed in the garden, due to the spread of the impact area. I remember thinking how lovely it was, though, watching sparks of him fly into the twilight sky from the verandah...

She was lucky, though — and I mean, of course, relatively so — it wasn't bushfire season. Just imagine!

After all the fuss had died down — in what was referred to in *The Chronicle* and some Sydney tabloids as 'The Victa Affair' — and the coronial inquest had established the exact cause of death (*Death By Lawn Mower*, it was established in the end), the young woman continued to live on in the house, though after the trauma of her husband's death — she'd been elbow deep in washing, there was nothing she could do but hear it all — no amount of consolation or understanding cups of tea could scrub away the remains of her husband's memory, splattered all over the linen and the back fence and the flowerbeds.

Her heart must've been bristle-red and raw with all that scrubbing (said my father, as the washing up crashed and banged in the kitchen).

When someone dies, everyone gathers at the wake to celebrate and remember their life. I've been to some great wakes, full of love and laughter. But when the last mourner has gone, and the bereaved are left with the drying crusts of uneaten sandwiches and the detritus of half-drunk beer bottles to clean up, the real grieving begins in the cold silence of the empty house, the shadows smelling faintly of the dearly departed, the echo of their voice whinnying away.

Anyway, people's lives go on and eventually the bereaved must be left to their grief. Of course, some hold onto their grief and wear it proudly — and I'm not talking

about dear old Mrs Carey and her ‘poor Doug’ (who in death filled her conversation almost as much as he did that bar stool at the end of the Middle Pub bar in life) — but others swallow it up inside them so it has nowhere else to go. Sadness, like love, like any other energy, has to go somewhere.

The wise will find a way to let it go, and not worry where it went. In the case of this young woman, however, one can imagine how it must’ve started: her loneliness bleeding itself blue over the empty expanse of her bed, soaking into the mattress, spilling over the sheets and the carpet, seeping through the net curtains and the drapes...

A cursory check revealed no physiological abnormalities, just the usual depredations of grief: she was a little paler and thinner than normal, didn’t have a sparkle in her eye, seemed flat. She did mention during the course of our chat that the garden had been doing very well since her husband died and she had more runner beans and chokos than she knew what to do with. The sweet peas were up over the wall.

However, for some reason, I could only see her during the day, so I couldn’t confirm the glowing. Anyway, it didn’t take long to.

I asked her if she’d be happy come to the Base Hospital in Borrigal for overnight observation, just to make sure everything was fine. She didn’t seem to mind — in fact, she didn’t feel one thing or another.

As I left, she loaded up the boot of the car with two big boxes of beans and chokos. I tell you! If your mother wasn’t such an inventive cook, I’d be off them forever (he said, his voice raised loudly enough for our mother to hear over the washing up)!

Anyway, we put her in the observation ward. I asked the good sister to keep an eye on her, check her blood pressure, her breathing and all that. She was admitted, and even Sister Gloria Munday, who’s always been a stickler for the rules, called a spade a spade — well, mostly — didn’t mind about the doona: it’d be a quiet night anyway, barring bushfires or a bus crash.

All was well for night calls and it seemed like it’d be a quiet night. Anyway, at about one o’clock, Sister Gloria called me back urgently. Complications. What

complications, Sister Gloria? I asked, but she just told me to get down there post-haste (or something like that, you know what a plain talker she was).

Even before I got to the observation ward, I could see what she was talking about. There was a blue glow, emanating not just from the ob-ward, but bleeding down the hall. It wasn't the kind of gentle, subliminal glow of a night light, like the kind we kept in your room when you were afraid of the dark — yes, even you (he said to the glowering in the shadows)! No, it was a violent kind of glow, painful to watch, a kind of indigo sadness, diffused from her heart, filling up all the veins and arteries in her body. It was most spectacular around her chest, and her heart shone through her ribcage like a fire-fly caught in a net, beating at a frantic rate, as though it were trying to escape.

In fact, moths and other night insects had flown in through some open window — I asked Sister Gloria to get Barry to check the fly screens, just in case — and they were orbiting her radiant body. Occasionally they'd brush past her face, and she'd moan and toss and turn, but it didn't seem as if her sleep was disturbed or difficult. But for the strangeness of it all, you'd say it was one of the most beautiful things you'd ever seen, I said to Sister Gloria. Like the fireflies up the Hand Cave, she said.

I took the patient's blood pressure and pulse without disturbing her, and checked her chart. There was nothing unusual — she was a little hotter than normal, but that may have just been the weather. There was some shortness of breath, which suggested an allergy or mild bronchial infection, some kind of congestion. What was most interesting was that I didn't need the x-rays I might have ordinarily ordered (we'd just gotten a new x-ray machine down the Base Hospital and Sister Gloria was dying to try it out). You could see her entire thorax, lit up from inside, her lungs moving and blood circulating. I could see the bronchial congestion, some possible contraction of the papillae in the lungs, which suggested a respiratory condition such as asthma. I suppose that if she hadn't gotten to us earlier — glowing or not — she might've suffered a serious attack sooner or later, given the amount of time she spent in the garden.

What was most amazing was how, as her sleep got deeper, her glow steadily increased to a level I conservatively estimated to be eleven or twelve candles' worth. In fact, I didn't need to turn on the light or use a torch to read her chart — the light

was as strong and similar to the mozzie zapper Matey's got over the baked goods down the Milk Bar.

What was most amazing was that, despite all the commotion of other patients wandering in, woken by the glow, and Sister Gloria and I preparing a nebuliser, the patient didn't wake up (but then, as you know, I'm a very light sleeper, and anything rouses me — that's why I sleep in my study most nights).

Once I'd prescribed her some regular nebulisation, with instructions to drop in at the surgery once a week for a chest examination, there was nothing I could do but let her go home. After the skin cultures and blood tests came back, it didn't seem there was anything *physiologically* wrong with her, despite her 'somno-subluceate puteulanic morphitis,' as I termed it — as it should have been called, if I'd ever gotten around to submitting my report to *The Lancet*. Although 'Glowing Widow Syndrome' also has a nice ring to it.

For a while, she became something of a novelty around town when word got out about the blue glow that emanated from her bedroom window, especially round Christmas time, in those days before everybody had a telly. Crowds would gather singing carols, softly, so as not to wake her and end the show. It was reported that on cloudy nights young lovers would spoon in the blue shadows thrown into the bush at the back of her house. She eventually left town for parts unknown. But her beans and chokos! She won the blue ribbon in the Legume Division at the District Show that year, before she left. You couldn't hold a candle to her beans — all the other entries paled by comparison (said my father over the suddenly dark silence, our mother having gone to bed and turned out the kitchen lights).

5.

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING AND EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE, MY FATHER OFTEN SAID (especially when he caught sight of what lay behind my brother's door), and that included everybody too, especially in a town like ours, where 'knowin' yer place' made you 'fair dinkum.' In our town, everybody just did what their parents and their parents' parents before them did. Not just the way Wally Clifford's dim son Kenny would probably take over the Boat Shed; or how Shane Brownlow would as likely as not end up on the trawlers like his weathered dad; or the same sour-breathed, rankled drunkenness that Dean Moran would inevitably inherit from his father, Gunna — the same hard-fisted, spit-flung way his father would have inherited it from *his* father (had he even known him, useless buggers, the lot of 'em, grizzled Mr Tuttle, to little disagreement).

There weren't many exceptions: boys took over the property from their fathers when they retired or died; and girls married the boys that did. They'd even meet them in the same church hall at the Borrigal or Nungah Bachelors' and Spinsters' Ball that their own parents had before them, and they'd end up living and loving and birthing and dying here, just as their parents and their parents' parents before them had.

Though nobody really expected Angus Day would end up a boner or mincer: he was Destined for Bigger Things. I had the best role model a child could dream of in my father, even if I feared — the maths aside — I didn't possess the many fine qualities and talents that made him such an outstanding doctor, with such a long and distinguished career and hard-earned reputation behind him.

Before my brother stopped singing, my father had tried to counsel him — in light of his increasingly failing grades since he'd started Big School — the importance of Something to Fall Back On. I don't think my father expected my brother would ever follow in his footsteps; and as he'd pointed out, it wasn't anticipated my brother would disappoint his dismal expectations.

I too was torn in my own way, even though I hoped my father harboured medical ambitions for me. Sometimes, tapping the thermometer, he'd say I'd make a good doctor someday, if not an even better hypochondriac. Perhaps even then part of me realised I mightn't have what it took — even without considering the maths — to

become a doctor, let alone one as accomplished and distinguished as my father. I wasn't much good at anything much, which is why I never signed my name to the poems I'd send in to *The Chronicle's* Contributors' Corner from time to time. The blooming flush of seeing my words in print made me dizzy with excitement: and I almost burst with the urge to tell everybody, especially my father and Charlie as I shivered with the fear they'd laugh when they read whatever it was I wrote. But at least I knew who Anonymous was, and like the truth, *As Long As You Know It In Your Heart, Doesn't Matter What Anybody Else Thinks*, according to my father. But as I say, I was too scared to find out.

Finding old clippings of that childish poesy years later, I was struck, as I was by almost everything I revisited of my childhood, by how small they were, and though I mightn't ever become a doctor, I'd never make a writer.

And though, had I the ability for medicine *and* the talent to write, I might have considered both, who'd ever heard of a writing doctor, or a doctoring writer?

Yet, reflecting his professional dedication to the facts, pure and simple, my father, whose talent for recounting case histories needs no further reiteration, never bothered with the long, romantic Russian novels that would keep our mother locked up in her room all day, the laundry and washing up piling up, dinner smoking ten minutes' late.

—It was all just make-believe, my father asserted, and if you believed that, you'd believe anything. *There's Nothing Like The Truth*, he liked to say, and only read medical textbooks and journals or the newspaper; he loved the news, and the moment the Majestic Fanfare swelled out of the speakers, all noise had to stop.

Still, I sometimes wondered if my father was ever disappointed in me as much as he seemed to be with my brother: my brother would never be the son he wanted; I never could be. And the only folk who didn't leave our town where people didn't come to settle, those not *Destined for Bigger Things*, were those who had nowhere else to go. Like us, then.

LIKE YOUR FAMILY, YOU NEVER GET TO CHOOSE YOUR NAME. OF COURSE, SOME people may change it via deed poll, but most of us grow used to the names we've been given, and even to love them, just as we mostly do our family.

And yet the name we have to live with is often not even the name our family bestowed upon us, which, like the Cenotaph standing to proud and lonely attention outside the old church hall, is more often than not a memorial to the Heroic Dead.

(Ned Wilson's family name was Cyril. Not even the middle, but the Christian. Every Wilson man and boy had it, even his dad, Big Ned, who was built like the proverbial brick outhouse, so to avoid confusion, every Wilson man and boy was called by their middle name, which seemed even more confusing. Still, nobody would ever get away with lispng *Thyril* to Big Ned down Middle Pub as Dean Moran and Shane Brownlow did to little Ned in the playground. As though his name were *his* fault, not his family's)

No, the name we often have to live with is the name everybody else chooses for you, the name they think represents you best. Sometimes, it was literal, like Juggers Simpson, whose ears stuck out of his head like a ute with the doors open, or Dean Moran's dissolute dad, Gunna, who was always 'gunna do this, gunna do that.' More often than not, it was ironic, like Skinny Goodrich, the fattest kid in school, or Bluey Jackson, whose unruly red thatch always blushed. And, as my father pointed out, purely clinically, with no apparent hint of prejudice, Snowy Shillingsworth was Black As The Ace Of Spades, though his mother Shirley was a Nott, and *technically* white.

Which was whatever Dean Moran and Shane Brownlow could come up with with their limited vocabularies and even more limited imagination. Numb-nuts, dick-wad, dangle-berry, asshole. Ones not worth repeating and ones that should never be repeated (though many rhymed with the ducking you'd do to escape their crazed fists). Even ones that they'd clearly made up, and which made no sense at all to anyone but them, but which you still knew meant something. And besides, it seemed too far away to imagine what I'd do, let alone who I'd be. I wasn't sure who I was yet myself, and as I got older, the very idea got trickier and trickier to contemplate.

I NEVER LIKED MY REAL NAME, AND THOUGH I DISLIKED MY NICKNAME EVEN MORE, I became so used to it, I couldn't imagine myself as anyone else.

I remember once going to my father when Dean Moran and Shane Brownlow had made fun of my name — they'd even found out the middle one, which I hated most of all — and, taking me on his wide, deep lap, he laughed.

— What's in a name? It's only to make sure you know when someone's calling you. So we can tell who's who. Sticks and stones'll break your bones...

Of course, my father's wisdom in this matter — as in most others — was unimpeachable. A Name Doesn't Make You, he always said. Your Actions Do. Of course it was just a name. But I'm ashamed even now to admit remember thinking with childish indignation how unfair it all was, and that it was easy to say that when everyone called you Doc with respectfully shining eyes. His name was what he did, and it was who he was.

But my father had worked hard to earn a name in town, despite my brother's best efforts at smoking it away. No matter who you are, he'd always said, pointedly *not* looking at my brother, smouldering away in the verandah corner, you're nothing without your name: it's all you have in the end: it's what defines you, gives you substance: if you lose it, you lose everything: you're nothing. You may as well be invisible. You may as well be dead.

(that my father, not prone to emotive language, and so in love with life that he'd dedicated his own to saving it, should use such an expression, is a fair indication of his feelings on the subject. Yet what did that mean for me, who felt invisible most of the time anyway?)

A name was nothing, but it meant everything. The weight of that felt as overburdening as my names, both bestowed and imposed. My Christian and my nick. Once, Mr Fulbright, usually so generous and indulgent, refused to let us name a poddy calf with great, deep, vulnerable eyes, rejected by its mother, lowing so mournfully and yearningly in the fly-sparky dusk it echoed through us, turning us inside out with grief.

— You shouldn't give a name to anything you'll be eating, children — the sense of which Cec, no yacker anyway, couldn't even contemplate discussing. But he couldn't refuse Charlie anything.

Mooley would greedily slop over our hands as we fed her, pressing till it hurt against the fence wire's barbs. We felt grown-up and responsible, tending her, and the

guilt and horror when she was finally sent down the clattering, lonely road to the abattoir stuck to me for months after like bindis to a soft bare foot. I couldn't eat meat for a month — apart from sausages, rissoles, sausage rolls and meat pies, which didn't look Mooey.

Mooey. I could hardly remember her face, and I'd barely (if at all) thought of her after my resistance to our mother's mouth-watering chops had finally dissolved. And what was even more horrifying than my callous forgetfulness was the thought that Charlie, too, might forget me like a needy vealer. She'd gotten over the heartbreak much quicker than me, as if it had never even happened.

NOBODY KNEW WHY MYSTERY BAY WAS SO NAMED; IT WAS SO OLD IT ALREADY had the name when The Major came upon it, bestowed (they said) from afar by Captain Cook as he mapped the coast. And nobody knew when Wimboola or Gidgeree or Borrigal were ever named, nor even what their names meant any more, not even the Jindy Mob. There was some outrageous talk by some Smoke academics that Blackfell Point was named after the bluff near the Spit The Major and his men drove fierce Jindyworobak warriors back to after they'd kidnapped a shipwrecked girl whose ship had been lost on the rocks past the bay, just past the reefs out at Desolation Sound.

But these Smoke academics said he'd driven women and children and old folk over the edge, not warriors — who'd all been away hunting, and, they surmised — 'outrageously,' according to *The Chronicle's* front page editorial — that they *hadn't* kidnapped the girl but saved her from drowning.

—Communist pinko bloody nonsense, tutted Mr Tuttle down Middle Pub, and most were inclined to agree, as *The Chronicle's* letters pages spilled over with passionate defences of the town's founder's honour. Somehow, though, these came with what appeared to be equally vociferous attacks on the Jindy Mob, as though they'd had anything to do with whatever happened up there on that windy, eerie bluff.

Given everything The Major and his descendants have given the District, we should all be grateful, wrote Eugene Hicks of Mildendo Station, out Nungah way. *And any inadvertent mishaps that occurred along the way should be considered in*

light of the many greater benefits, especially for the Aborigines. Moreover, why should we bear any responsibility for historical events beyond our control?

To think of the enormous resources directed to Aboriginal welfare at the expense of ordinary, hard-working Aussie battlers, such as free education in Government boarding schools, where they were fed and trained properly, job placement on properties and in homesteads, offering them a chance to be productive members of normal society! And yet there they are, hand out for dole money they waste on grog, acting as if they're owed something for all our hard work and taxpayer dollars, wrote K F Deweller of Blacky Flat.

Living fossils of a dying race, unable to cope with the demands of the modern world, as some scientists in Germany have pointed out, and soon they will all be gone like the Tasmanian sub-species, and it might be the best thing for them and us, wrote Herbert Spencer of Wilga.

Yet, though I wasn't foolish nor brave enough to ask why, it seemed strange that for all the enormous resources directed to Aboriginal welfare, there seemed so little to show for it. Strange, said Mr Goodrich, how much 'indigenous' (as apparently some 'town blacks' liked to call themselves now) sounded like 'indigent.' Or why, for all the fierce debate — which had somehow gone beyond Blackfell Point and stormed right into the Jindy Mob camp down The Spit, Clarry Clackett hadn't published any letters to the contrary, defending those long-dead savages and their wretched descendants, least of all by anybody from the Jindy Mob. What if their ancestors *had* saved that girl? And if — and it was a tenuous *if*, given the lack of available evidence — it had been a tragic misunderstanding, did it make what happened any less horrific? Or more justifiable? The very idea!

Yet even then it seemed confusing that in a town like ours, where everybody knew each other and everybody else's business, that though a lot of blackfellas seemed to work as hard as anybody on the trawlers or the abattoir or up with stock in the hills (if for only half the pay), and though everybody, especially those down Doon Pub, would work and drink with them (if Big Kel was being uncharacteristically generous and let them into the Public Bar, rather than out the back), that though they could live side by side with blackfellas, they couldn't abide the *idea* of Aborigines.

—It's un-bloody-Strine! Mr Tuttle would spit, his mouth crusted with beer and spleen. Yer either Aussie or not — not this Abo-bloody-ridgy-didgy hoo-ha. If ya don't like it, go walkabout, ya drongos.

But it wouldn't have been clear who he was talking about: the idea of Aborigines, or the huddled group who sipped their beers quietly, pretending not to hear anything, no matter how loudly Mr Tuttle's spittle-inflected words tarred and feathered them, just as everybody else in Doon Pub said nothing, looked away.

And though our town was clearly divided by Top, Middle and Doon pubs and who drank in them, the division was more clear between black and white, even if with noisy messy clans like the Morans and Brownlows it wasn't always so easy to make the distinction. They weren't just above the Jindy Mob because their slovenly houses — spilling over with dirty, bare-foot, snot-nosed tykes; drunk, bawling men; blowsy, foul-mouthed, loose-breasted women; rusting hulks and tattering rubbish in the wild front yards — backed onto the dreary, slippery bank above the creek bed down the Spit, but because they were, *technically*, white. Even if they were 'shady' in the worst sense of the word and couldn't, unlike the blackfellas that *did* work up in the hills, be trusted with stock or tools — although in a town like ours, there wasn't any shade of difference, for some reason.

—Not much better than boongs, the lot of 'em, asserted Mr Tuttle, and on that point at least, nobody, apart from the rowdily bellicose Morans, could argue; even if it was widely acknowledged that before he'd lost his block in Indochina and the rest of his mind in the sanatorium, Nigger Shillingsworth had been the best breaker in the District, and if he hadn't been black, the once-brittle pretty Shirley would have been much envied for snagging him. As it was, she was roundly condemned, even black-balled from her erstwhile clan's uproarious shivoos, the din reverberating across the creek bed and the lake, splintering the night with screamed obscenities and ugly debauchery, by the sound of it. Maybe his parents' disregard for long-standing tradition and acceptable behaviour explained why polite and bogan society alike all disapproved of Snowy, though unlike Boyd Moran, Dean's madder, badder and dangerouser big brother, he'd never done anything more than fritter away his days, loitering down the bus stop with my brother and the other hoons or surfing down Mystery Bay, in our town where the only thing we seemed to have any surfeit of was time.

(Still, according to my father, Matey, Big Kel, Constable Hudson, Mr Tuttle and others, You had to watch ‘im. Was only a mattera time: after all, he was tarred with the same mucky brush, twice over. Nonetheless, it seemed unfair to be judged by the actions of your parents, even if I wasn’t about to complain being part of the Doc’s Family)

What was most confusing was how the wogs — the eye-ties, the curry munchers, the towelheads and the chinks — weren’t considered quite true blue either. Only the eye-ties were considered ‘New Australians’ — the rest, despite both Mr Chow’s family and the Sikhs having been in the District almost as long as the Fulbrights, were Still, *always would be*, ‘blow-ins,’ beyond the pale, keeping and kept at a distance almost as broad as their odd-sounding Strine accents (though it was whispered Matey’s real name was Jiannis Matsopoulos, nobody ever called him a wog, or anything but Matey).

Perhaps it was their stubborn insistence on keeping to themselves and their own strange customs. You never saw them, apart from occasional days the men would appear, ripples of unfamiliarity, proud and tall in their bright, brilliant turbans and long glossy beards. If you’d put their heads in tins instead of turbans, they might have passed for Ned Kelly.

You never saw the women, which was yet another reason to distrust them, though that always seemed odd, given you didn’t see many housewives out of the house, unless they were down the Shops for a gossip and a gas. Much less down any of the pubs.

Sometimes, speeding past on the Borrigal Bypass, we’d catch sight of the gleaming dome of the towelheads’ temple (built against much opposition in raucous Council meetings and even more vehemently in *The Chronicle*’s letters page), bursting out of the tops of the cedars and gums, alien and anomalous, the mysterious whiff of their curries and incense carried on the blurring breeze through the open car window, which, coupled with my car sickness, only made me nauseous, before it was snatched away into the distance. We never stopped, despite our mother suggesting it one day. It, like them, didn’t seem quite right.

—Un-bloody-Strine! Mr Tuttle would bellow again. Yer either Aussie or not. If ya come here, ya act like decent Strines, nunna this weirdo woggy reffo bull dust!

(Still, when two towelhead kids changed their names from Waldeep and Matindar to Wal and Matilda, they copped it even more. — *Wal Singh?* cried Dean Moran. — *Matilda?* What kinder names is that? Hoodja think yers are? From somebody whose dad was called Gunna for all the things he was *gunna* do but never did, that was, for want of a better expression, the pot calling the kettles black)

Being part of the Doc's Family, then, meant we should have been above such concerns, though I was glad that even if I couldn't have picked my family any more than my name, at least I wasn't a Moran or a Brownlow or a Singh. Much less a Shillingsworth.

But like Mr Tuttle's nebulous Unnastrineness (which could be invoked for any reason — being Abo, Woggy, wowserish, disagreeing as opposed to being disagreeable, taking his cherished stool at the end of the Middle Pub bar — and the definition of which got fuzzier and more vociferous the more sozzled he got), it seemed the only certain idea you could have of yourself was what you *weren't*.

Case History No. 6: Molluscular Dermatitis

ONCE THERE WAS AN OLD MAN (MY FATHER BEGAN, FISHING AN ICE CUBE FROM HIS tumbler) who had barnacles growing all over his body. At first, it might seem this predicament was unfortunate, given that barnacles are tenacious creatures, greedy and seaweedy. However, although anybody who saw him, crustaceaned in a hard, salt-sharp shell suit, might be horrified or shake their heads in pity, he'd just laugh: barnacles only stow away on the best vessels, he'd gurgle. The old man loved the sea.

He still worked with his three eldest sons in the boatshed down the Long Jetty; loved boats and the Spit's sour salt water. It was in his blood, he'd say, just as much brine as rum. He loved to fish, loved to eat fish, loved to swim, loved the sea and everything in it and about it. For him, life began and ended with the Drink; and his sons told me later he'd often mutter that he wished he'd been born a whale or a turtle instead of a man: he admired those noble, ancient creatures much more than his fellows.

He'd had a hard life on the waves, been all over the world, seen all kinds of difficulties and troubles. He'd been in storms on the Tierra del Fuego where the waves boiled as if on fire; he'd been stilled in the endless doldrums of the wide Sargasso Sea; he'd flown home from the Cape of Good Hope on the Roaring Forties, shoals of flying fish slicing through the wind and water like silver ribbons. His face was scuffed as the boots of any ancient mariner; his hands roped and calloused with knots and splinters. It seemed — his molluscular affliction aside — the sea had already seeped into him, becoming him, or he becoming it. The old man and the sea: they washed into each other.

So when the first few barnacles started to appear, he was not overly concerned, he told me later. He was an old bloke, after all. Who was he to worry about another insult of age? They all called him 'Muscles' down the Long Jetty. Could've been Mussels... though he wasn't sure: his hearing had long faded, its canals filled with water, all the sussurous sea. It'd been years since he'd heard the mermaids singing to him, let alone each other.

(my father, though neither superstitious nor prone to poetry, nevertheless understood the magic of a well-placed allusion, no doubt a reflection of his extensive reading, even if he preferred the certainty of facts to the fancies of fiction)

Despite my best efforts, including sending an epidermal biopsy to the Base Hospital for testing (we'd just gotten a new skin culture machine and Sister Gloria Munday was dying to try it out), I couldn't find any conventional treatment for his condition, other than a prescription for a mild anti-histamine to relieve the itchiness.

One's of course tempted to draw a parallel between itchiness and ichthyosis, the maddeningly itchy scale disease, so called because of its similarity in appearance to fish skin; but this was not a dermatological inflammation but a dermatological infestation (it wasn't molluscum contagiosum either). I considered sending in a report to *The Lancet* about my new discovery, which I termed molluscular dermatitis, but in the end, was too busy with my many other responsibilities.

I urged a drastic reduction in the amount of seafood he ate — when he was presented to surgery by his sons, he gave off a strong fishy odour (although subsequent tests did not confirm trimethylaminuria, or Smelly Fish Syndrome). I believe he ignored my advice, though he did use the anti-histamine cream. But then, no prescription could have purged that pong.

I also suggested that the next time he was scraping his boat down the dry dock, he might consider running the chisel over himself, or getting one of the boys to do his back. This worked for quite some time, helping to keep the unabating molluscs at bay; but eventually, when the last of his sons had died, and everyone else had moved away, he was reduced to some sort of mute, senile turtle, overhung with heavy growths and bitter itchiness.

Eventually, he just walked into the ocean, never to be seen again. Some of the prawnies, heading out for the night, saw an odd stony shape glissando into the darkness but it was too far to make out clearly. Some of the children that hung around down the Long Jetty believed he'd swum off with the giant turtles we used to see down the Spit; but the fishermen and more sensible folk knew he'd have been hopelessly weighed down by his back, swallowed up by the Drink. They say drowning's like sleeping: still, if I had the choice, I'd want to keep my wits about me when my time came, with my family round me (he said in a distant voice, not looking at my brother, snoring in the corner).

(now, my father was a man whose enthusiasm for life was reflected not only in his exuberant enjoyment of it but in his professional dedication to saving it on a daily basis, was a scientific, rather than philosophical man, and not often prone to such musings)

Sometimes I wonder if he might've been better off growing pippies or oysters or even mussels on his back, because of course, he wouldn't have had any shortage of volunteers to scrape him off then (my father chuckled). If only barnacles tasted better (he said over the faint distracted flapping of the front fly screen. Our mother had disappeared again, with a note on the back of the shopping list on the kitchen table: *Down the beach*. My father said he'd wait up for her; he was on call to the Base Hospital that night anyway.)

WHATEVER HER OTHER CRAZES AND PHASES, OUR MOTHER LOVED THE SEA, IN SPITE of my father's misgivings about the dangerous rips and unpredictable currents that crept in around the heads like unseen assailants, crouching in the jagged knuckles of the rocky outcrop past Mystery Bay to carry the unsuspecting away. Unlike the other mothers, who watched with serene detachment from their banana lounges, our mother always enthusiastically splashed around in the shallows with us, teaching us with varying degrees of success the fundamentals of swimming. While my brother, with his big feet, took to the water like the proverbial duck, I was as wary of it as my father, recoiling with horror at the sudden slimy unseen touch of seaweed, jerking back from any sensation that the shore was rushing away from me.

My father would wave at us to stay within the flags, not to drift out too far, not to swim too soon after eating. Despite having once been a sailor — or perhaps because of it — in each relentless wave he saw only unanswered questions, unreliable answers, lack of order, ugly as smashed crabs, clammy with the rank smell of the deep's unfathomable ooze.

But after lunch, as my brother and I strained at the edge of the blanket for the prescribed twenty minutes, while my father dozed off lunch, our mother would stride into the sea, her swimming cap and goggles firmly stented, and head out past Desolation Sound till we couldn't see her. Sometimes I'd be consumed by the

shivering fear that the sea would swallow her, that she'd disappear into the treacherous tide and be carried far away from us for ever, and even my father, always so unflappable, would become a little concerned, as the afternoon sun suddenly cooled and the beach whipped little shreds of sand into us.

But our mother was too strong a swimmer, and she'd always return, tired and silent but smiling, as though she'd been somewhere even sunnier, even more colourful than our safe bivouac of shore, both of us panting with happiness as she caught me in her wet-dappled arms.

My mother once gave me an old photograph of that trip to the beach. I carried it around with me until it got so frayed, so tatty, it fell apart. Underneath the fingerprint trails of white lines that scarred it, and the fading of years, I could see my family, red and smiling: my father has his arm round our mother, and we are all squinting, because the old man who took the photo took it more or less in the direction of the sea so it would show where we were, and as a result, the picture was overexposed, the sea behind us a shining darkness making shadows of us all.

You could barely see our faces. I don't know why it was my favourite picture, given my fear of the sea and the quality of the photography, but it reminded me of a happy time, when we were all still together, our skin tender and sticky. Funny how the photos of childhood — let alone your parents', if you actually got to see them — seem so small and blurry and suffused with redness, like blood tinted by water.

While my father, as noted above, was candid while recounting case histories, he wasn't as forthcoming about his own history. And, as also noted, our mother wasn't much for talking. How difficult it was for my brother and me to place ourselves, when we had no grandparents to tell us stories, or aunts and uncles to spoil us, or cousins to compare ourselves to, to knit ourselves into. All we had was each other, and our position in town, as the Doc's Family. Nothing more, leaving our idea of ourselves as folded and faded as the lines of that disintegrated picture though then, that should have been more than enough. More than anything now, anyway.

Besides, as noted above, it was a touchy subject, all mention of it hanging unspoken in the gaps of everyday life. Even now, I find myself demurring from referring to it explicitly: even if not speaking of it left it constantly on our minds.

6.

I DON'T THINK I EVER MISSED A SINGLE DAY OF LITTLE SCHOOL, APART FROM that one day. Although Skinny Goodrich undoubtedly enjoyed a liberal note policy, courtesy of his mother, which saved him from cricket, athletics, swimming carnivals, and regular days at school, I wasn't so lucky. Having a doctor father makes it so much harder to convince anybody you're feeling sick. I was always sure I had something serious: in that last year alone I was sure I presented the symptoms for:

Epstein-Barr Syndrome; Lyme disease; Graves' Disease; Irritable Bowel Syndrome; Chagas disease; arthritis; erythema infectiosum; hemolytic anaemia; rheumatic fever; whooping cough; micropsia (or Alice in Wonderland Syndrome); lymphatic filiarisis; Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease; Monge's disease; Reynaud's Phenomenon; uniparental disomy; chimaerism; Sabinas Brittle Hair Syndrome; ichthyosis vulgaris; incontinentia pigmenti; keratoconjunctivitis sicca (or dry eye); keratoconus; typhoid; cholera; and once, waking up thirsty with drool foaming on my pillow, rabies.

Much to my consternation, my father would just laugh, commending me on my reading. He was right, of course. Sometimes the words in the *Encyclopaedia Pathologica* were too big, and I couldn't find them in the normal dictionary either. Sometimes there were pictures: I was sure that I had keratoconus, though I couldn't tell how conical or misshapen my corneas were, squinting sideways in the mirror. Sabinas Brittle Hair Syndrome in a particularly hirsute Mexican tribe (though not having it didn't explain my own wiry shock, shreds of which, like my father's hair, always clogged the drain). Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease was not a dental condition but a podiatric one. Rabies, or hydrophobia, as it was once known, had never come to Australia. We were safe, at least, from that. And, as my father pointed out, his finger drumming the page in the *Encyclopaedia Pathologica* where it should have been, although pneumonoultramicroscopic silicovolcaniosis was caused by volcanic dust particles, there were no active volcanoes in Australia, and it was most likely a fictional disease.

—You'll make a good doctor one day, my father would say, shaking the thermometer. Or a great hypochondriac, as I coughed weakly.

His amused demeanour only exacerbated my erythema infectiosum, making my cheeks bloom and flush. The thermometer was big and cold and did *not* go in your mouth.

—Bend over, and I'll take your temperature, my father would say, suddenly professional, and of course, I never could. Once was enough, more than enough. Only Angus Day and I never missed a school day: he because he was he (and his mother was working); me because I was more afraid of the thermometer than I was of PE.

I was no good at mathematics, and it was a matter of deep frustration for me that I could never decipher its meaning. It also meant that I might not ever become a doctor.

(—We-e-ell, that's not *strictly* true, said my father, looking at another *Could try harder* in Mr Bulpitt's fussy hand in the Maths column of my report card. You need an acute eye, an ability to solve problems, deep dedication, and a good memory. Oh, and a sense of sympathy. But maths is what gets you in, he said. Doesn't really matter after that, he added, his voice dropping, making sure my mother, still 'doing the numbers' in her numerology phase, didn't hear. Besides, go do your homework! Case histories later, he said, as he settled in for the news.)

Maths is what gets you in. The numbers never lied, according to my mother, especially when the numerology really took hold of her. I dreaded Big School mathematics, where Skinny Goodrich said he'd heard from his cousin that they used arcane formulae, brackets, letters, algebra. I couldn't even break the words down into anything understandable: I remember once catching sight of my brother's still undone homework and found my tongue twisted around 'hyperbolic' and 'Pythagorean' and 'isosceles.' They sounded pathological: Quadratic Syndrome, parabolic disease, polynomial disorder, multiplying denominators. Nothing seemed to add up.

This never applied to Angus Day, curly haired, white-smiled, perfect. Unlike me, tripping up in myself, everything seemed so easy, so effortless for him. Where I'd struggle, my tongue straining out of the corner of my mouth, my head aching with confusion and concentration), I'd watch him enviously as he his forehead wrinkled, doing sum after sum as though he were ticking boxes. Always finishing early and getting extra work from Mr Bulpitt, smiling proudly. He always seemed so comfortable in his skin, unlike me, who resented my own itchy hide, which like my father's, would break out in patches of painful eczema from time to time.

He should've had tickets on himself, but he didn't, and that was yet another reason to dislike him.

His dad had died a few years back, caught in the big mincer down the abattoir, and since then, his mother had had to take over his shift. Years later, I often wondered what it must have been like, standing over the mincer, wondering how many shreds of her late husband were still stuck in its teeth. There were rumours that she talked to the mincer on night shifts, as if he were watching over her, but they weren't much more than whispers: she was Too Decent a Lady and it was generally agreed she'd done A Bonzer Job on raising her shining boy on her own. He was brung up good, as they'd say every Speech Day, when he got up yet again for yet another prize.

Everybody liked him, and even trouble-makers like Dean Moran or Shane Brownlow tried to curry his favour. Especially Charlie, and sometimes I wondered if she liked him more than me, even though we were meant to be bestest friends. I never asked her, just in case she said yes, but sometimes I'd see them diving into the billabong together and wished I was as brave, as eager to get wet.

But that billabong... sometimes I felt as if *I* were the one tagging along, even though I knew Angus Day had never seen our Secret Castle, that Charlie and me were spit-and-scab brothers and had promised each other never to reveal the secrets of our place. I'd have never betrayed it to anybody, and I couldn't imagine Charlie would. Not then, but then I could hardly imagine anything that was to come, even as I cannot remember for the life of me what was to follow.

I didn't have the maths or the ball skills, let alone that glaringly winning smile. And more and more, seeing Charlie wheel her bike round Angus Day in ever tighter circles down the bus stop shed, was yet another reason I started to suspect I'd always be left out, a regularly divisible remainder.

How I wished I were Angus Day, and how I hated myself for wishing I were, and weren't me.

OF COURSE, NEXT YEAR, AT THE END OF SUMMER, THE DAY AFTER AUSTRALIA DAY, I'd be off to Big School in Borrigal, where my brother was already smoking behind the shelter sheds with Snowy and the hoons, sliding into the slack-jawed, beetle-eyed

delinquency that was failing his grades and ruining his chances, whatever of them he had left.

And Big School was where bigger kids like Snowy and the hoons made your life HELL. I knew this because Skinny Goodrich told me about a kid, who, being from Borrigal, I'd never heard of, and who'd been flushed down the boys' dunnies, never to be seen or heard of again. And he knew this 'cos he'd heard it from his dad's cousin's son, who'd end up taking over from his dad and run Boggart and Son Plumbing. Of course, if anyone didn't know what was coming to him in Big School, it would have been Skinny Goodrich, but as he was heading to the same posh Smoke boarding school his dad had gone, he could afford to snicker, even as I chased after him in a terrible, terrified fury.

THE BASE HOSPITAL WAS ALWAYS BEING FILLED WITH NEW EQUIPMENT SISTER Gloria was always dying to try out and which my father, always obliging, was happy to sign off on. Even today, I'm sure many people remember and miss the exemplary standard of the Base Hospital then, when it was considered one of the best-equipped regional primary care facilities in the State, if not the country. People would come from miles around to get tested on one of the new machines, to have their babies delivered, to have procedures done. It was a measure of my father's reputation and standing in the District and especially outside it, that people were so eager to be treated by him — let alone his selfless willingness to sacrifice his free time and family life to attend to them.

Once, my father told me, three young men — one of them allegedly Boyd Moran — had gone joyriding in the hills. As far as he could make out later, they'd been car-surfing: one of them had gotten on the roof of the car, and, holding those elastic ocky straps that people used to tie loads down to roof-racks or keep boot lids shut, had ridden the rusty old banger, whooping and bellowing till he came off round that tricky hairpin bend past Potter's Corner, up near the crossroad.

Boyd and the other one had left him out there, covered in banana mash from the plantation on the hill. Left him to die — what mate does that? was the disgusted word

round town. Not that they took it up with the Morans — who needed the grief, let alone the black eye?

Drunk and speeding, no doubt, Constable Hudson said later, though his investigations came to nothing — there was still some honour in the shanty town by the Long Jetty, and nobody heard nuthin', nobody knew nuthin', nobody said nuthin'. Boyd had gone to Walgett to see relatives, and stayed with them for ages, even after his unfortunate mate had recovered and had long limped out of hospital.

His injuries had been horrific, including a compound fracture of his left leg, punctured lung, dislocated right shoulder, retinal detachment in left eye, contusions, bruising and tearing, the skin stripped from his back.

It might've been the concussion that did it, but somehow, he crawled on his right leg and left arm all the way to the Base Hospital, somehow rolling down the hill, somehow crossing two creeks and the railway line, somehow making it down the highway before collapsing in the foyer, where Sister Gloria's cry alerted my father.

Neither Sister Gloria nor my father had ever seen anything like it. What was most perplexing was the thought that nobody had seen him, inching along the asphalt, the flies festering on his weeping skin, as he painfully made his way to the hospital. Or more troubling, the thought that they had...

And all he said before he collapsed on the threshold, as the automatic doors opened and shut on him, was Can yer givvus a hand, Doc? I'm feelin' a bit crook.

He could've stopped anybody on the way — though everyone knew the Eye-ties didn't take kindly to trespassers on their plantations. But it's a testament to my father's hard-earned reputation that that boy *did* crawl for three days, nearly dead, just to receive my father's healing touch.

MOST NIGHTS IN OUR TOWN, THE RISING ARM OF THE MILKY WAY WOULD BE cloaked in darkness, the stars blacked out as the bats streamed from wherever they'd been sleeping to the banana plantations to feast. Even then it struck me, how so many things were not what they seemed: those flocks of not-birds seeking trees that weren't really trees (according to *Tell Me Why*). Tyre swans, alleged Panthers, best friends, the world, maybe even me.

WHAT MADE MY FATHER SUCH A DISTINGUISHED AND WELL-RESPECTED doctor was what made him such an engaging narrator, if not a man as well. It wasn't merely his fine wit or his attention to detail, though these added much to the pleasure of the telling as the listening. It wasn't even his mellifluous, well-spoken voice or deep dark brown rumble. Rather, it was his ability to see beyond the symptoms and beneath patients' skins, their stories. My father could step inside the skins of the stories he was telling, so you couldn't always be sure if, by donning the skins or masks or symptoms of a particular case history, it was really him speaking. My father could be whoever and whatever he wanted to be, from a cowboy to an Indian (both kinds), adopting a range of mannerisms and an array of accents. Had he not been so professionally and personally inclined towards the scientific discipline of being a doctor, I am sure he could have been a wonderful actor. Mrs Lilywhite at the Musical Society was always begging him to join the Company, Please Doctor, you'd be just wonderful, but he always demurred, citing his many responsibilities and busy schedule — And besides, such frivolous artistic pursuits, it was felt (though of course, never said, especially in her hearing) were more our mother's thing.

Although there were ample opportunities for grown-ups of my parents' standing to socialise, including the District Races and the various Balls, Fêtes, Shows, and Carnivals that marked the passing of the year, my parents — unlike the 'hoi polloi' who'd gather for barbies, or what Mr Goodrich (in whose colognic trail they tittered '*Flash Gordon*') might slickly call 'corroborees' to polite tittering up the ladies' end — would convene with the other Movers and Shakers of the District for Sunday Luncheon. The '—eon' was an important distinction.

Before Luncheon, our mother would bustle about like an orchestral conductor, sprinkling and chopping and stirring, glancing from time to time at the stained recipe book open to the side of the sink as I tried to keep out of the way (and steal a lick of batter if I could get away with it).

Given that in a town like ours, most men ate their tea in singlets, and given that he had his own napkin ring, my father always folded the napkins, which he'd transform into any number of things: swans or scallop shells or sailing ships or the Sydney Harbour Bridge, depending on what took his fancy. For all his scientific rigour and professionalism — let alone his big hands — my father had a creative streak, which

he'd express on occasion through the napkins, or his case histories, or his other inventions.

My father loved to invent, and if he wasn't on rounds down the Base Hospital; in his study; or on the verandah sharing his case histories, you could find him in his shed, tinkering away, coming up with some new cure for his patients' ills, which, given his extensive knowledge of pathology and pharmacology, kept so many of his patients in such rude good health.

He was always the 'life of the party,' as the ladies liked to tipsily giggle. I remember seeing my father surrounded by appreciative locals, hanging on every word, only tearing themselves away to refill his glass or go to the toot. Almost everybody laughing, especially at one of his favourite and best-loved Luncheon turns, when, smelling the lip of a glass of some flash wine Mr Goodrich had brought back from holidays, and drinking in the bouquet, he'd close his eyes rapturously and murmuring ecstatically, almost to the verge of moaning:

— Ah, this is a fine sherry sack! Good faith, there's never none of these demure boys (he'd say, nodding in the general direction of the sunroom) come to any proof, for thin drink doth so overcool their blood, and making many fish meals (not looking in the direction of the kitchen), that they fall into a kind of male-green sickness, and then, when they marry, they get wenches [*wink, wink, titter, titter*]. They are generally fools and cowards, which some of us should be too, but for inflammation (looking at Old Earl, uneasily rubbing his gouty knee). A good sherry sack hath a two-fold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain, dries me there with all the foolish and dull and crudy, crusty vapours which environ it, makes it apprehensive, quick, forgettive, full of nimble, fiery and delectable shapes, which deliver o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit [*nudge, nudge, chortle, chortle*].

The second property of your excellent sherry, good sir (he continued, raising his glass in Mr Goodrich's general direction), is the warming of the blood, which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice (much the same as each other, six of one, half a dozen the other, he'd add for Old Earl's benefit).

But the sherry warms it and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extremes. It illuminateth the face, which as a beacon gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm, and then the vital commoners and inland petty spirits

muster me all to their captain, the heart, who, great and puffed up with this retinue, doth any deed of courage, and this valour cometh of sherry!

If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be to forswear thin potations and to addict themselves to sack (to which everyone would toast uproariously, knowing full well my father's echoing his much loved and even more repeated maxim of Everything in Moderation, though if the toast was clamorous enough, my father might demur with Ah, but discretion is the better part of valour! To die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man; but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valour is discretion, in the which better part I have sav'd my life... and so on, and so on and — here, once, I think I might have heard my mother muttering something like And on and on and bloody on — but equally, I may have misheard it. I was running to the Big Fig and she was clearing the table, so it might merely be my imagination. Or my unreliable memory, playing tricks on me again).

Almost everybody would laugh, even me if I saw it (not understanding a word then, like almost everything I ever overheard). Sister Gloria would turn to Barry amidst the revelry with a touch of something more than admiration, sighing how 'naughty' he was. Ooh, you *are* terrible, Doc! Isn't he, Barry?

Well, almost everybody, apart from Old Earl, who was 'a beer man, meself, Doc,' patting his blushing bottle of Dinner Ale (to which my father would riposte, fast as lightning, This same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me, nor a man cannot make him laugh. But that's no marvel, he drinks no wine!). And our mother, probably because she was busy bringing Luncheon to the table; perhaps because she'd heard them many times before; or perhaps because, for all her other wonderful attributes, she mightn't have had a quite as well-developed sense of humour as my father. Especially that summer.

Our mother didn't *dislike* Sister Gloria: in a town as small as ours, you couldn't afford to get anybody off-side But she didn't quite like her either, as she and my father discussed 'hospital business' up his end, while she cleared the table. How complicated the grown-up world seemed, where you had to be nice to people you didn't particularly like. Politeness seemed another way of not saying what you really meant.

Funny though, how even then, I realised how, just as they say one thing and mean another, grown-ups smiles hide deeper, more complicated feelings. Most children's relationships are more straightforward: you either like someone or you don't, and they know it. It's only as you get older you learn how to hide your true feelings. But as soon as we'd gulped down pudding, I'd be off with Charlie to my room or up the Big Fig, and pretend not to have overheard anything, any more than the grown-ups pretended that they hadn't seen anything either.

YET FOR ALL HIS EXTROVERSION, MY FATHER WASN'T ONE TO 'TOOT HIS OWN horn,' as they liked to say around town. Unlike Mr Goodrich the Solicitor, or Mr Horsley the Vet, my father didn't bother with displaying his many qualifications, nor advertising his rooms with a plaque.

— Why bother? he'd say laughing. Everybody knows who I am and they all know where to find me! And in a town like ours, he was telling the truth there.

— But, added my father, if they're really dying for a gander, I'll dig them up. But I'm a clinician, not a book-keeper! I'm hopeless with paperwork... And it's a measure of his prodigious memory that in spite of all the files spilling out of cabinets like gossip from housewives' blouses, he was able to keep track of and remember all his patients and their faces and conditions, if not always their names.

Such modesty and discretion endeared him even more to the District, from Borrigal all the way to Gidgeree, right up to the day he was carried away. There was, in fact, a Doc's Bottle on the top shelf of every Top Pub in the District, even The Railway down Wimboola way (which, being the only pub in town, had to be all three), and I am sure it was as much a sign of pride that a man of my father's reputation and standing would patronise them.

My father was always coming home with jams and cakes and crocheted toilet paper holders shaped like Bo Peep; patients would always be offering him bananas and mangoes and to do odd jobs like the gardening or painting — Wally Clifford down the Boatshed came by once a fortnight to wash his car, out of gratitude for my father's swift and relatively painless treatment of a particularly bad case of paddy

foot. And always, despite my father's genuine protestations to pay them, Nah, Doc, no worries.

— You can be whomever you want to be, my father once told me, you just have to know who you are to know who you want to be. He was, after all, a self-made man as far as I knew, knowing nothing about his past before he met and married our mother. I didn't understand that at the time, but didn't it mean that to know who I was, I needed to know who he was, and who he'd been? But I didn't think to bring it up with my father then, and I've since regretted subsequently coming up with the question long after I had the chance to ask it.

ACCORDING TO MY FATHER, IN HIS EXPERIENCE, THERE WERE SEVEN STAGES OF medical treatment:

1. Presentation, where the patient presented themselves and their symptoms;
2. Interrogation, where the practitioner questioned the patient clinically to attempt a prognosis;
3. Prognosis, where the practitioner, employing histological knowledge and applying medical experience, assumed an initial assessment of the problem;
4. Determination, where the practitioner applied or ordered particular diagnostic procedures to test that prognosis;
5. Diagnosis, where the practitioner, referring to the diagnostic results, identified the disorder;
6. Prescription, where the practitioner decided or recommended the appropriate course of action and treatment, whether surgical or pharmacological;
7. Treatment, where the course of rectification was applied and cure achieved.

A good doctor, asserted my father, identified often seemingly disparate and discrete symptoms at presentation and, through assiduous and acute interrogation, ‘joined the dots’ (so to speak, my father said) to reach a plausible prognosis: he let the symptoms speak as much as — if not sometimes more than — the patient. Between my father’s enigmatic *mmmmms* and the patient’s moans (or those evasive little white lies, such as how long they’d stopped smoking or how many vegetables they were eating; or those elisive little stories about ‘a friend of a friend’ who suffered something so embarrassing that they could not present in person to the surgery but not so embarrassing they couldn’t tell the friend of a friend who’d presented on their behalf...) the symptoms spoke, or at least to my father, *sang*.

—The prognosis is the thing, my father once said, his eyes shining in the evanescent glimmer of the verandah.

Not the cure, and all the grateful jams and appreciative cakes that went with it? Not even the crocheted toilet paper holders that looked like Bo Peep?

He laughed, though I couldn’t tell the colour of his laughter in the twilight.

—No! Once you’ve identified the disorder, the treatment in most cases is just routine procedure: the prescription of medication or the lancing of a boil. And the cure’s straightforward, almost anti-climactic, even with all the gratification and gratitude that comes with it. But the prognosis... there may be some who consider it par for the course; some brilliant clinicians — no doubt specialists — who don’t appreciate the thrill of that moment, when the idea comes to life. For them, it may be expected. For all my professionalism, I can never forget the brilliance and terror and exhilaration that comes with the prognosis: it’s the one naked moment where you’ve either got it, or you don’t. And if you’ve gotten it...

His voice dropped: he sighed.

I remember it was very late, and I was very sleepy, and our mother was still down the beach, where she was spending more and more time lately (my brother who knew where), and in the trembling smatter of the verandah light, beating with moths and mosquitoes, I was too tired, too preoccupied with my own childish worries, to realise the significance of that evening. It’s only now I wish I’d listened more closely, though I wonder, even if I had, whether I’d have really understood what he was trying to say.

—It's a lot like marriage... like, you know, love, he said over the murmuring of his tumbler. That initial, exciting doubt. The rest's just routine procedure.

(it surely needs no further iteration by now that my father, a scientific man concerned purely with the facts, pure and simple, was not usually prone to philosophical or emotional musings. How I wish I'd paid closer attention! I can't even be certain now that I've remember anything correctly, and hope again that any omission or extrapolation is forgiven; like my father, and unlike many of his patients, I'm not given to deliberate untruths.)

Case History No. 7: Acute Beta-carotene Toxicosis

ONCE THERE WAS A MAN (MY FATHER BEGAN, AS THE SKY GLOAMED VERMILLION IN his tumbler) who turned orange. As the change was so gradual, he didn't notice it, but it was clearly apparent when he presented himself at the surgery. He was very self-conscious about his appearance, not because of his orange lustre, but the very large and distressing carbuncle on his right cheek.

—It's this thing on me dial, innit, Doc? he said self-consciously. I took him to the mirror and it was all he could do to look at himself...

—Tell me what you see, I said, holding the palm of my hand against his cheek (*although, as noted above, my father was a dark man, his palms were sumptuously soft and white*). He flinched: his cheek was very tender, with some residual seepage.

—It's bloody horrible, innit, Doc? he cried. Get it off me, please!

(I should also point out my father was not a man used to swearing, even those of the mildest variety. The only time he'd have ever used that expression would have been clinically. However, for the purposes of authenticity, I have included a few such expressions as I imagine may have been used)

The removal of a carbuncle is an exercise in frustration (*he continued sagely*) because although the urge is to attack it with great force and lance it, such radical treatment can often lead to greater complications such as scarring or cellulitis. Therefore, although the patient may wish the growth be removed post-haste, patience and tact are required. The carbuncle must be approached with stealth, otherwise it's likely to dig in and cause more damage in the end.

I asked him about his recent medical history as I hadn't seen him in quite a while. He was a long-distance truck driver for a big transport company, hauling goods across the Nullarbor Plain, spending a lot of time on the road. One can imagine the loneliness closing in all around him in the hot wasteful expanse of the desert, but he seemed a cheerful chap, if a little edgy. He seemed perfectly healthy — in fact, healthier since the last time I'd seen him, apart from the carbunculosis and the carrotty hue.

It turned out that on my advice, his wife had ordered him to give up smoking (a disgusting habit, he said, looking pointedly at my brother, smouldering in the corner), but in the early stages, he'd found it very difficult.

One of the principal methods of giving up smoking (that disgusting habit) is by substitution. The reformed smoker's hands are always seeking the comfortable rhythm of old routines, such as rolling and lighting and holding the cigarette in a particular way... To keep his hands busy on the long eventless drive (and to improve his diet, thick with chips and camp-pie by the side of the road) his wife had cut up a few bags of carrots which he chewed as he drove. To his surprise, he enjoyed the carrot fags immensely, to the exclusion of all other foods or diversions (apart from beer — his immense gut attested to that). The other drivers started calling him 'Bugs' on the radio, he said with a chuckle, and I could see that he enjoyed the freedom of his job, even though it seemed to me a rough sort of calling: times and loads and gear ratios and lonely nights in cheap road houses...

Anyway, the bags of carrots became bigger and bigger, and he became a connoisseur of carrots, much as others become connoisseurs of wine.

He could appreciate the complexities and flavours of multitudes of carrots: nuances of bouquet, colour, texture... He told me with a chuckle of their different personalities: some tasted best in the morning and woke you up; some tasted best for mornos, others for arvos, others still for smokos; some tasted best when you were lonely... Imperatos were substantial carrots, full of authority; Berlandas were full of strength; Oranzas were dilettantes that made you feel hungry half an hour later; Danvers only tasted good for you, and were his least favourite, the cauli of the carrot world, he called them.

(My brother and I, still digesting that evening's cauliflower au gratin, shuddered, even though our mother had served it with sweet and sour pork...)

Often, he said, he'd pause to appreciate the fine colour of a Scarlet Nantes, his eyes torn between the red sky bleeding into the red earth and the red stub of his carrot... he learned to appreciate that colour so much, he said, that other colours irritated him, but he could see much better at night, even though he had noticed he was getting jumpier.

After listening to all this, the prognosis was fairly easily reached: he had beta-carotene poisoning, and the only remedy was to give up the carrots. That was why he was so jumpy (like a rabbit), could see so well at night (like a rabbit), had turned orange (like a... carrot). But it was a secondary consideration to the carbuncle, which obviously caused him such a lot of distress.

I prescribed a course of antibiotics, followed by a topical steroid to help dislodge the carbuncle. It was important he visited me again after a week, and although he was disappointed that it could not be removed immediately, there was no other course of action at this stage.

I also asked him for a blood and urine sample, and as expected they were orange as well. I sent them to Borrigal for analysis, to confirm my prognosis, as we'd just gotten a new serology machine down the Base Hospital and Sister Gloria was dying to try it out. The main thing was to ensure that he could give up his addiction to carrots more easily than his addiction to smoking (that disgusting habit).

When he came in the following week, the carbuncle was considerably less inflamed and looked ready to come out. After I'd removed it, I took him to the mirror again and, holding my palm against his cheek, asked him what he saw. What's up, Doc? he asked uncertainly. He'd grown so used to being orange that he hadn't noticed any change. He'd thought people were still staring at him because of the way that the antibiotic cream had bleached the skin around the carbuncle site, and asked when his skin would change back to normal.

—That's just the thing, Bugs, I said. Your skin isn't normal: it's orange.

He laughed heartily at that. It's not April Fool's, is it, Doc? he said.

I had to be firm. No, it's orange, the most orange-coloured skin I've ever seen. Positively carrotty, I'm afraid, I said authoritatively (though it was in fact the first case of beta-carotene poisoning I'd ever seen.)

—I've just got a good tan, he said defensively.

I could see we were going nowhere, so I called my secretary in. As you may remember, Mrs Curry was a very polite, discreet lady (did a lot of work for the CWA) and she didn't say anything at all, just looked a little nonplussed.

—Whatcher see, Beryl? Bugs said.

— Well, she said finally. You're orange, Bugs.

That did it. He became very upset, accusing me of prescribing him antibiotic cream that had turned him orange. But after calming him down, I pointed out that his excessive diet of carrots had turned him orange. He was disbelieving, as most addicts are. I asked him to stop eating carrots for three weeks to allow the carotene to dissipate. He seemed very reluctant and dubious, but was happy to do it, if only to prove that carrots weren't the problem.

So, when I saw him again three weeks later, I was surprised to see the orange had drained from his face: this time he was completely white, looked like a ghost, some kind of startling albino. You could see the veins throb and ebb under his skin. But at least his vermilion shade — and carbuncle — had disappeared.

— You were absolutely right, Doc, he said gratefully. I must've looked a right dill! Me and me wife had a big laugh when I realised how orange I was... I looked at a photo of meself from Christmas and thought: *You look like a bloody plum puddin'!*

— Or a carrot cake, I added. How many you eating now, Bugs? I asked.

— Aw, don't touch 'em any more, Doc, he said, shivering.

— So you're eating a more balanced diet?

— Of course, he said. Mashed spuds and ice-cream... hasn't it done wonders for me complexion? he said with a wink. Positively creamy, wooncha say? Now, 'magine what it'd do fer the coons —

— Yes, thank you Bugs, I replied. I'm the doctor...

(My brother and I loved this story when we were younger. I remember pestering our mother for carrots day after day so that I, too, could turn orange... perhaps then I'd be noticed for something. But of course, carrots are like any vegetable when you're young: they still taste too good for you, and soon my carrot-eating craze passed, without as much as a slight variation in my tincture.

But although it was a humorous story, I remember the lesson my father tried to teach us from it: that while many things were good for you — and many more bad — even good things were bad in excess. Perhaps that's why my father was such a disciplined man, in all matters, never allowing himself to stray far from anything in moderation, apart from the odd extra whisky. From the hours he kept, to the exercise

he took, even to the limits of his humour, my father always lived by the motto
Everything in Moderation.

And I also remember years later, after we'd heard the story many many times —
though I never tired of it, or any of my father's stories — overhearing my brother one
afternoon down the bus stop with Snowy Shillingsworth and the gang: Durries might
give ya cancer, but at least they don't turn ya nuther colour...)

7.

SEEING WHAT YOU SHOULDN'T, HEARING WHAT YOU WEREN'T MEANT TO, FEELING what you couldn't understand. Sometimes I wonder now if that painful transition from childhood to what follows is much like war (or, as our mother told me later, marriage): lots of boredom punctuated by reconnaissance and violence: everything shrouded in a fog of confusion, the shadows sometimes falling on something horrific. Sometimes I wonder how anyone makes it out of adolescence alive.

Worst of all, the fear, which I fear was congenital. I was afraid of lots of things: the Yowie; drop-bears; sea-lice; magpies; snakes; spiders; bull-ants; feral dogs, cats and pigs; bluebottles — flies and jellyfish; cicadas, especially Black Princes; blue-ringed octopi; sharks; moths (but not butterflies); cockroaches; electric eels; Dean Moran (but not Shane Brownlow; the dark; heights (but not the top branches of the Big Fig); excessive speed; choking on apple skin; paralysis; drowning; getting shot; being hit by the brandings ball; being hit by a car; slipping in the bath; ghosts (especially Potter's corner up by the crossroads); vampires; werewolves; goblins; everything imaginable and everything that wasn't; the Alleged Panther; and my parents arguing (though it never happened that often, almost never, not really, well, apart from a few times, and never until —).

But before the Alleged Panther, I can't recall any real horrors beyond my own febrile imagination: I was never bitten, I didn't drown, the few cars and trucks lost on their way to the Borrigal Bypass never hit me, Charlie hadn't left yet, nor had my father been carried away. But it seemed as if there were as many dangers at home, where most accidents happened, as there ever were in the sea or the billabong or prowling the hills.

But just as our mother must have rescued me from rampant moths, the unreliable branches of unfamiliar trees and deep-sea rips, my father was on hand to treat every ailment and disease that afflicted me, and to disabuse and reassure me of every other ailment and disease that, for all my prognostic certitude, did not. And both of them from my brother.

But as I got older, I began to realise that our parents could not protect me from every real and imagined threat the world beyond the verandah had in store. Was it

facing another day at school, struggling to be brave and not dobbing about the relentless bruising and branding? Was it finding yourself in a strange, unfriendly tree far from home, grappling with ways to get down, despite its branches' pressing talons and its oblivious cruelty? Was it facing off magpies on the long ride to Orangetrees, jumping off the capricious swinging rope at the billabong, going to sleep without the reassuring slice of corridor to keep whatever was under the bed at bay?

As my father was fond of saying, *Heroism Comes Not From Courage, But From Overcoming Cowardice*. But whatever little personal victories I won over my cowardice were no match for its overwhelming shame. Those little skirmishes I fought in my ignominious living went unheralded — unlike the brave and faithful sacrifices of *The Glorious Dead* who had, lest we ever forgot, succumbed to the distant perils of the battlefield, sea and air to defend our cherished way of life.

Face your fears, my father would say when I confessed yet another one. *All You Have To Fear Is Fear Itself*. But how could you face your fears if even the thought of them frightened you? Let alone the restive nightmares they scuttled into? And how did facing them make you braver? What if you were afraid of being eaten alive by a million angry bull-ants, as I was? How could you face your fears — all angry million of them — and survive? What if you were afraid of drowning? How could you allow yourself to be caught in a rip or the depths?

Fear's Only As Deep As The Mind Allows, my father liked to say, but he was so big and strong, and I was so small and weak. He could have, if he'd wanted, I'm sure, waded out much further than me before he was caught in the depths, and our mother could swim much farther. What hope did I have, paddling by the shore, still infested with seaweed and bitey crabs and blue-ring octopii? How could they hear me, so far away, waving frantically from the shallows?

And what about the *Alleged Panther*? Although then I had no doubt my father was the cleverest, strongest, bravest man in the world, I wondered how he might be able to protect us from the Panther, which grew bigger and wilder with each and every report of another cow slashed, another lamb gone (besides, despite his strength and vigour, my father had his own niggling ailments, including rebellious skin which sometimes raised itself into querulous weals whenever he was stressed or upset. Now I know why he took to wearing long sleeved shirts that summer, despite the heat).

But as I've gotten older, I've discovered that the most frightening things in life aren't those to come, but those that are taken away.

BUT EVEN MORE THAN THE ALLEGED PANTHER, EVEN MORE THAN EVERYTHING ELSE I was afraid of, I was deeply afraid my cowardice might be too embedded to be ever rid of, like a festering carbuncle that took root against every effort to excise it.

That's my father's influence, I suppose, and, given his professional inclinations to treatment, he viewed every problem — and in my brother's own fraught case, every character defect — as symptoms of a disorder which could be corrected or removed with the right treatment and the proper dedication.

How I wished I could cure my fearful cowardice with a course of medication or, if absolutely necessary, an operation. But my morbid fear of choking on tablets and capsules meant our mother was forced, despite my father's exasperation, to break them up and stir them into cordial for me, as I bravely tried to swallow the bitterness. I did try to swallow a tablet in pieces but one of the shards lodged in my throat and I ended up vomiting on the kitchen floor. After that my mother insisted that on the occasions I needed to take medicine, I did it out on the verandah with a glass of cordial.

I was terrified of eye-drops, and they'd end up streaming down my face as I wriggled like a lamb getting drenched. You couldn't even mention needles: I once ran out of the house and jumped on my bike and rode for miles and miles and miles before my father caught up with me near the abandoned racetrack, smiling in a strange way that didn't match the cloudy look in his eyes, enticing me back to the car with a Chupa Chup, before grabbing me and jabbing me panting with the tetanus booster — and a smack for good measure.

But was there anything medicine could not cure? From the removal of warts to the stitching of wounds; the setting of bones to the reconstruction of hare palates... it could even cure madness (though since his lobotomy, Snowy's drooling father Nigger returned from the Repat sanitorium neither mad, nor quite alive, lost in a fog of inanity).

Given my inability to cope with even minor procedures, any major surgery was out of the question: while there was some small consolation in the fact I mightn't feel anything, the idea of anaesthetic awareness — waking up during the operation and feeling everything without being able to move while they cut and clamped and cauterised — scared me as much as being buried alive.

(I remember more than once waking in fright, eviscerated by the scalpel as it cut into me, only to find the sharp corner of *The Magic Pudding* lodged into my side where I'd dropped it while falling asleep reading.)

But as my father was fond of remarking, A Healthy Body Needs a Healthy Mind. Treating pathology didn't just involve pharmacology but psychology. He often as much persuaded patients like me that they would be better off without the treatment, even if unlike me they were afflicted with an ailment.

HOW I WISH MY FATHER COULD HAVE PRESCRIBED ME SOMETHING psychosomatacal — my pathological fear of choking on a tablet aside (even if, as my father exasperatedly pointed out, I had no such fears with lollies from Matey's).

Ultimately, like everything else, it was a question of belief. If you believed you'd get better, then you had a good chance of recovery. It was as much up here (my father would say, tapping his temple) as it is down there (he continued, pressing his hand over his heart). And patients *want to believe*. They don't want to see the complications and side effects, the instruments and cost. Patients will swallow anything, my father used to remark, and with good reason (on his part, not theirs): he'd seen more than his fair share of trichophagics, xylophagics, geophagics and worse. But that was without considering the dipsomaniacs, the smokers, the compulsive over-eaters; the vitamin addicts, the herbal tincture devotees, the Israeli army cabbage soup dieters; the foolish and the desperate and the gullible ...

— Funny, said my father: they all want a pill for it, even when moderation or abstinence would do the trick.

There was no miracle cure, least of all without belief. No amount of modern medicine could cure anybody who didn't believe in its efficacy, which is why the medications he'd invented ended up being so popular with so many patients. Unlike

the pharmaceutical prescriptions they often ended up not taking as directed, everybody loved the medications he concocted in his study, which, my father asserted, was the key ingredient in their efficacy, where the other emollients and ointments and emetics had failed. Love and Faith, These Two, he asserted, Could Cure Anything. And though I believed my father then, and believe in him now, I wish that was all you needed. But sometimes, even these aren't enough, especially when some things can never be healed, much less cured.

THE SHADOW OF THE ALLEGED PANTHER, WHICH CONTINUED ITS RELENTLESS ATTACKS on livestock in the District, had soon become a regular occurrence, although it didn't occur regularly enough for us to become used to it. On a dark night, on a moonlit night — it didn't really matter — another poor animal would be mauled, spread out in bloody splashes across a cold, lonely paddock, as its herd-mates howled with panic.

Sometimes it'd be a few, sometimes many. There didn't seem to be a pattern to make sense of it, other than they were getting more and more brazen. Nothing would happen for a few days, a couple of weeks, and the suspense would build up like a long-held breath, until suddenly, there'd be another attack, and then all the talk in town would be about 'what happened' and 'who it happened to' — there was always somebody who knew somebody who heard from somebody who...

Rumours and speculation raced through our small community with all the intensity of a hot grass fire, rank with savage smoke, that made ears sting and eyes water. I was sure I could hear the Alleged Panther moving around the house, and whenever the night breeze ran through the jacarandas in the garden, I was afraid to look at their fallen petals in the moonlight: they looked like spatters of blood.

Of course there was a small and vocal minority (Mr Tuttle, Big Kel down Doon Pub) who blamed it all not on the Alleged Panther but on the Jindy Mob. Although there was occasional trouble with some of the younger Jindies sometimes lifting odds and ends from Matey's Milk Bar, at first nobody took the idea of the Jindy Mob killing stock seriously. They knew better than that, especially in a town like ours. Surely. But Big Kel's vociferous (and, as Sergeant Hudson had to remind him,

unsubstantiated) allegations didn't stop him selling the blackfellas dented slabs of bear and half-crushed goons out the back after closing.

I remember once seeing Dawn, one of Snowy's little sisters, and one of her cousins (whose name escapes me now) amble into town. Even the genial Matey, who'd give my brother and me an extra couple of lollies in our mixed bags, would stand at the door of his shop tutting with one of his customers and watching them with hard eyes.

Skinny Goodrich foolishly asked why he didn't let them in. Matey looked at him as though he'd been dropped on his head (though with Skinny Goodrich, it couldn't have been ruled out). You just knew better not to ask.

— Because they'd steal everything in the shop, he said out of the corner of his mouth, looking at the ragged kids wandering hopelessly back to the edges of town, slowly enough for even Skinny to understand.

— Have they stolen a lot from you, Matey? asked Sammy, while the rest of us (Charlie and Angus Day and me) felt our stomachs churn and curdle the milkshakes we'd just gulped.

— Not yet, replied Matey, suddenly airy, as he shut the front door with a relieved tinkle, but they would if they could. You kids want some roadies?

We shook our heads, though Skinny Goodrich, always eager for more, happily nodded.

I remember looking out the window as Dawn and her thin-legged cousin disappeared into the haze, and seeing half the town suddenly stop like that, watching with suspicious eyes, as though the Alleged Panther itself had suddenly slinked up the main street. And I remember wondering when they'd ever get the opportunity, given such vigilance.

And I remember suddenly catching my reflection in Matey's dusty window, and catching my breath: like my father, I too, was 'a bit shady,' and it seemed then, in the dim light of the General Store, I wasn't much less shady than those kids, already vanished.

It was yet another moment I was grateful I'd been born into the Doc's family. I couldn't even imagine ever being taken away from my parents: it was too terrifying. I

thought of Dawn, her nose always caked with snot, the shy hungry look in her eyes, and I thanked my lucky stars we weren't black.

MY FATHER, EVER A STICKLER FOR ROUTINE, ALWAYS POLISHED HIS SHOES ON Sundays before lunch. After the lawn, before the car. He'd sit on the verandah with *The Chronicle* spread out in front of him, polish parading in military formations on the right, shoes lined up like surly schoolboys on his left, leaving the black ones for last. As my father reminded us, Shiny Shoes Show Good Character, but in his case, his exemplary character was reflected in the shining itself as much as the shining example.

He'd burnish and polish them into order, brushing away the grit and soil of the previous week, so that by the time he was done, they'd lost their puerile recalcitrance and gleamed on the verandah like proud young ensigns. For my father, any problem — of disease or disorder or discipline — worked on much the same principle: a little polish and a lot of elbow grease. As he liked to point out, Genius is 1% Inspiration and 99% Perspiration. That hot, foetid summer, he was definitely right about the last bit.

Unfortunately, as my father often remarked to generally amused giggles at Luncheon (apart from my mother, looking bemused, and Old Earl, baffled), that just as All Generalisations Are Dangerous In Medicine, As In Life — Even This One, there was an exception to every rule; and in his case, it was my brother, who seemed to get more and more scuffed by my father's ever more energetic efforts at buffing, till he soon seemed to lope about with unruly hair and uneven heels, worn down by his draggingly unyieldy feet, trailing furrowed shirt tails and insolent mutterings.

But though my brother had grown careless about his personal appearance, he tended his discontent almost as painstakingly as my father polished his shoes, or our mother whatever new craze had caught her fancy at the time.

AND JUST AS THE ALLEGED PANTHER GREW MORE BRAZEN, SO DID MY BROTHER. There were tidings through the usual channels that he'd been seen in the flickering light of the Shillingsworth campfire down the Spit; that he was down doing who knew what with the hoons and the Jindy Mob. Most likely not much useful, was the word round town, and definitely nothing good.

Dumping his dusty bag on the verandah, he'd huff into his room, the sunroom at the end of the verandah. Who could say what he did in there? You couldn't even hear yourself think, my father would say, banging on my brother's door to Turn It Down, D'You Hear? Although my brother didn't — *couldn't* in our town of mostly open doors — lock his bedroom door with a key hung on a chain round his neck as our mother did, he may as well have. The details of whatever he did who knew where or behind the sunroom's thundering noise remained as closed as his bedroom door and his dark, smirched face.

And he wouldn't tell anybody, least of all me. Like our mother, my brother wasn't much for talking, especially that summer. And entry for me was on pain of death into a growled world of hurt. Sometimes I'd catch a wedge of whatever it was wafting out on a sharp gust, the confusion strewn about the room and pushed right up to the lip of the door.

I REMEMBER OVERHEARING MY FATHER REMARKING DURING ONE OF THEIR quiet little chats — *not* eavesdropping: my father was speaking too loudly, in one of the rare occasions he raised his voice and his study was next to my room — *I've always had low expectations of you and you've never yet failed to disappoint*. Which, while reflecting my father's professional and personal dedication to the facts, pure and simple, was not untrue — even if it seemed, even to me then, a little unfair. And even then, I couldn't be sure, even as he was chatting to my brother that he wasn't speaking of all of us.

I couldn't tell you what was worse: hearing my father's lecture on manners and expected behaviour, or what came after. It was waiting for that, for what was yet to come: it was worse than the silence between the chat's points (punctuated by Am I

making myself clear? Or D'you hear me?), the way the soundlessness became thicker and thicker, swollen and throbbing and fleshy...

I got the same sick feeling I'd get in my stomach on those much rarer occasions I got a licking, and it was far worse to imagine my brother getting one than it was to actually get one myself. Which was happening more and more often...

— Yer nuthin' but a fake! A phony! Ya don't fool me! Yer nuthin' but a —

Smack!

Afterwards, my father came in to wish me sweet dreams. He stood still and panting at the door as the corridor bled into my room, a wedge of yellow. His anger had passed, though he didn't seem happier for it. His hands opened and closed like gulping fish, raw and shiny.

He reassured me that there was no actual proof the Alleged Panther existed — like the Yowie, it was Simply a case of mass hysteria and the moment it started raining, everybody'll be back to talking about stock yields and each other again. He laughed. And in any case, the Panther (Alleged and otherwise) was only attacking stock up in the hills, not children in town — though, he added, I should always go to bed early and go to sleep now, Just in case. I didn't find this as reassuring as I'm sure he meant it to be.

In the other room, I didn't hear anything, not even breathing, and the pitch-black hush that fell over the house made even me more frightened, though I couldn't say why. Still can't. Of course, I can't remember now what I dreamt up that night, though I know it was scarier than the Alleged Panther.

DOGS WERE SHYING AWAY FROM THE HILLS, WHIMPERING AND WHEELING, AND A couple of young jackaroos, armed with spotlights, shotguns, beer and bravado, had come back terrified, having seen 'sumthin'.' What it was, they wouldn't say, but their dogs — big, fierce, mottled piggers with tusk scars all through them, had run away yelping.

They'd seen a paw print — bigger than me hand, one said, his still trembling round the schooner glass. By the end of the week, that print had grown bigger than an

arm, and according to rough, light-hearted calculations made by my father, the Panther had become as many hands high as a thoroughbred horse, with teeth the size of a fist.

—Nonsense, said Mr Horsley at an impromptu meeting called by some concerned farmers down Middle Pub: *pantera pardis* was not the biggest big cat — that title belonged to *pantera tigris altaica*, the wild Siberian tiger, which grew to a maximum nose to tail length of three metres, or roughly ten feet and around eight hundred pounds, though this was based on anecdotal, rather than recorded evidence.

—Ten feet? Eight hundred *bloody* pounds? What if it wasn't a panther but a Siberian tiger? cried some increasingly hysterical voices in Middle Pub.

—Hardly likely, said Mr Horsley as patiently as he could. With their thick pelts, they'd hardly survive an antipodean summer, would they?

—But how could you explain the size of the print, another voice called out. Two foot across, according to someone who knew someone who...

Mr Symonds tried to keep calm.

—You need a special import licence to bring big cats into the country, he said. There weren't any Siberian tigers — to his knowledge — in any zoo in the country, not even Melbourne or Taronga. The Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo only kept Royal Bengals, and Bullen's Animal World — who leased most of their big cat stock out to circuses like Silvers and Ringling Brothers — had all of their stock accounted for. There hadn't been a circus in the District for ages, years even, since the Borrigal Bypass, and even if an animal had escaped, everybody would've known about it, wouldn't they? There'd be ring-masters and clowns putting up posters everywhere. Nobody laughed.

—Look, said Mr Symonds, trying to talk over the mob in his clotted voice. It's common sense: if a tiger had escaped from the circus, it'd have to have been attacking stock since it escaped — they don't hibernate. A private collector might have kept a panther and released it rather than putting it in a zoo. That's a possibility. With no competition, it might have had a free range, going over vast amounts of territory —

An uproar we could hear from school. Chairs scraping the floor of Middle Pub like a squall of squawking gulls.

—I don't understand yer technical hokey-pokey, mate, boomed out Big Ned Wilson, his heavy voice trembling with fear and fury. I don't give a fig if it's a leopard or a panther or a Siberian tiger or a Tasmanian tiger or a big pink elephant with bloody wings! All I know is I'm up to me neck in it — the lambin' was rotten this year, and the stock I've got is dyin' athirst, and the what's not dyin' is bein' killed! I've had to move half me mob into the shearing pen, and they're keepin' us up at night, bleatin' away. Sheila's drivin' me mental with her grizzlin'.

Sympathetic murmurs.

—An' bloody Chislewitt down the bank's makin' nasty noises about me last payment.

More murmurs.

—Now, either you tell us how to stop it, or we'll stop it ourselves! How soon before it runs outta stock an' starts comin' after us?

More Hear Hears and a bubbling muttering that almost sounded like growling. But like most things that summer, you could hardly hear the answer for all the shouts and whispers.

Case History No. 8: Proteus Syndrome Metatropic Dysplastic Dystrophic Gigantism

ONCE THERE WAS A BOY (MY FATHER BEGAN, STRETCHING HIS LEGS AS HE DRAINED the last of the tumbler) born with severe dwarfism, who grew into a giant. You'd think this might have been a blessing, but it ended up causing him more problems than if he'd stayed the way he was.

His original condition, metatropic dysplastic dystrophy, is a rare condition caused by recessive genes where there is a propensity to dwarfism in the family. This is naturally exacerbated when the parents are both dwarfs (although they prefer the term 'little people.')

The patient's parents were famous in show-business, having toured their act — which involved three miniature pinschers and a Shetland pony — all over the country. Even despite their affliction, they were doing pretty nicely.

Although the high probability of having a similarly afflicted child meant that prudent medical advice would not recommend procreation, many little people often ignore such advice, as they see no stigma to their condition, despite being sensitive to the ridicule and condescension of 'big people' (and there is no guarantee that the child won't be of normal height anyway). When the patient was born, it was expected, given that it appeared likely he too would be little, that he would follow in his parents' diminutive footsteps, carrying on the family business.

And so he did, touring with his parents to much acclaim, proving even more talented than them, until he fell off the pony while juggling three pinschers on a low wire. Unfortunately, there was no safety net — it was just a low wire after all — but he struck his head, causing a deep coma that lasted for just under forty days.

(seeing our concern, he added that the miniature pinschers and the pony were fine, though understandably shocked and traumatised by the accident)

He was rushed to the Base Hospital, and kept in observation in the new Intensive Care Unit, which had a multitude of new equipment that Sister Gloria had just unpacked and was dying to try out. Several tests were conducted during this time, including brain scans and x-rays, which revealed that the patient, thirteen at the time, had suffered a severe injury to the medullar lobe at the rear of the cortex. It was touch

and go for quite some time as to whether he'd recover from the head trauma, and to what extent his brain had been damaged.

His distraught parents abandoned the rest of the tour, taking rooms in the Borrigal Arms and putting the pony out to pasture at Michael Willett's property in Wimboola. A trying time: every parent's nightmare. They stayed by his bedside, taking turns to read to him and entertain him — and the other patients — with tricks from their routine. For such busy people, whose hands had always moved in their show, juggling or playing the ukulele or performing high-wire acts, it was difficult for them to sit still, and they jiggled restlessly and relentlessly like pots with over-brimming lids.

However, after forty days, the patient started to show signs of consciousness, registering his parents' presence and finally sitting up and talking after a further three days. He was in a lot of pain — apart from the fractures he'd sustained in the fall (compound fracture of the left tibia, two hairline fractures of the ribs, extensive bruising and contusions) — he reported in understandably slurred speech that his entire body was suffused with a deep, terribly itchy ache, causing him to wriggle uncomfortably within the constraints of his dressings and casts.

His parents asked when he'd be able to leave but I couldn't give them a definitive answer — brain injuries are always difficult to diagnose, let alone treat, and it was important to run further tests and undergo substantive rehabilitation and physiotherapy before we could come to an conclusions. Naturally, they were disappointed: not only would they be stuck in a strange town, attracting the strange looks of strangers, but their only source of income was gone for the foreseeable future.

However, after speaking with Mr Collins over at the Borrigal Astra, I was able to get them a short run of shows before the main feature, where they would present a series of highlights from their act, though without the low wire bit for safety reasons.

And so their son made slow and painful progress, learning to eat and speak and move his atrophied limbs again. Like his parents, he was a charming little man, and soon became a favourite among the nursing staff, especially Sister Gloria, who thought he was a little charmer — and you know what she was like, always called a spade a spade, and sometimes a bloody shovel.

However, it was soon noted that the patient had suffered an additional side-effect. Sister Gloria started noticing how much heavier he was getting, and how his arms and legs seemed to creep down the length of the bed, like an impatient vine, until they were pressing the hospital ends of the sheets. At first, this was assumed to be the result of his healthier appetite, and his features, which had once been distorted by his dwarfism were now being stretched, as though he were a long rope of taffy or rubber, so that his mother, not recognising the tall stranger in his bed, cried out in surprise one morning when she realised who it was.

A cursory measurement showed he'd grown over a foot in a week, and he was growing more and more. Soon, his feet were poking out the end of the bed, and everything about him had changed: his face had filled out in all directions; his hands and feet were as big as his legs and arms once were; and his voice had grown deeper and thicker. It was, his mother later tearfully told me outside, as though someone else were speaking for him.

His rate of growth was exponential: he put on about six feet in as many weeks. But if you think your growing pains are difficult, imagine his! His skin was stretched to breaking point in many places as it struggled to keep up with the impatient tug of his bones, which were thin and chalky — they couldn't produce enough calcium for adequate density. He was in constant pain, as though he were being stretched on a rack; he had no sense of balance and was often dizzy and dry-mouthed with disorientation. Worst of all, he could feel the awkward stares of his parents when they visited, seeing someone taller and more unlike their son than before. Where they'd filled his room with the tinkle of happy laughter and snappy repartee there was now only an ungainly silence, leavened with meaningless small talk. They'd become a tragically comic trio, this disproportionate little family.

We did our best: gave him super-doses of calcium and iron to help with bone density; extra portions of spinach, red meat and protein whey to help with muscle production; extra amounts of zinc and potassium and multi-vitamins to keep up with the voracious demands of his new body.

But it seemed no matter what we did, we couldn't do enough. In a couple of months, he'd filled out four beds, lying spatchcocked and useless, his face wreathed in agony. He couldn't speak, not with the amount of morphine we were pumping through him to help with the pain: he was going through a good portion of our

monthly allowance, and although I advised the Health Department of the reasons for our demands, it was difficult to source new supplies, given the problems associated with opiate synthesis in those days.

We had to give him blood transfusions, enormous amounts, to prevent him from getting hypo-tension and anaemia. It was as if he were a vacuum, sucking everything we had out of us: even the air in the Intensive Care Ward had become thin: he could suck an oxygen cylinder dry in under ten minutes. We toyed with the idea of a blood drive, just to keep supplies up, in case of other emergencies, but his parents were also terrified that the press would find out what had happened, given their own prominence in show business circles. They were worried what others in their little community might think, as though they'd somehow betrayed them.

Of course, it was nobody's fault: just one of those things, but as the father said grimly, It don't look good. How would they accommodate their enormous son in their miniature home, with its low tables and tiny cups? In his prone state, it'd take them all day to feed him, let alone wash him or dress him. They were overwhelmed with despair. And he just kept on growing. And growing. And growing.

The only thing that'd do it would be to go into his brain and remove his pituitary gland — it wouldn't reverse the growth he'd already undergone, but it was his best chance to prevent him growing any further: as it was, we couldn't figure out how to get him out of the hospital, much less transport him back to Sydney, at the rate he was increasing: it was like he was dissolving into a pool of painfully enormous proportions.

But, despite my expertise in many matters medical, there was no way I was going to attempt brain surgery, especially at a medullar level. It's nearly the most primitive part of the brain, stuck like a wad of chewing gum at the end of the brain stem, and just one false move... his distraught parents asked me how much it'd cost. I couldn't tell them, and I didn't want to estimate. Not as much as the renovations, I said, at the rate he's going, you'll have to keep rebuilding every time he grows out of the house.

Well, that did it.

—Blow the cost, they trilled, though that may've just been their nervousness and resolve. We called in a specialist from Macquarie Street. It was a terrible operation — brain surgery's the worst, after intestinal surgery — so fiddly and bloody, and I

assisted (well, if you want to be a doctor, you have to deal with all those secretions and excretions: medicine isn't a vocation for the squeamish, he said to my screwed up face). The usual sternal saw wouldn't do; we had to get not just one but two electric Eulenspiegel saws, the specialist and I working round the skull's equator until we met somewhere round the temples. Then, using a car jack as a skull key, the three of us — the specialist, myself and Sister Gloria assisting — rolled it back: it was like peeling the shell off an ancient turtle, that's how heavy it was.

Touch and go for a while, but the surgeon came good, as did the patient, in the circumstances. Subsequent measurements showed he hadn't grown any further — the surgery was so successful, he never had to cut his hair or clip his fingernails again. It took him some time to grow into his new body — he didn't walk for some time, though I don't know how he might have anyway — even when on all fours his back touched the roof of the Base Hospital. We snuck him out one night, when he was well enough, with the help of Barry Munday and Darryl Naylor, who'd pulled the back wall off the ward with his winch, then loaded the patient into the container at the back of a semi we'd pooled together to hire from a big place in Dubbo.

His parents got him home and by all accounts, it was a bittersweet homecoming: nothing fitted, and though they'd done their best to put an extra floor on the house, the day would eventually come when they'd have to own up and acknowledge him as their son. But in the end, it worked out fine: he ended being billed as the World's Tallest Dwarf, and barring the high wire — which of course, was now redundant — he continued to juggle the pinschers and the pony, throwing his delighted parents into the act.

Remember that remake of King Kong a couple of years ago?

(we nodded with excitement)

Well, if you look closely enough, you'll see it's not a special effect: his eyes are green, and apes don't have such prominent sclerae (or eye whites). I'll leave that up to you — but they made enough money to build an enormous house, with a pretty little house in the living room for Mum and Dad to live in as well — a doll's house in comparison to the rest of it. If you drive up the coast, as far as Nambucca Heads, you might glimpse it, past the she-oaks and fast growing bamboo they put up for privacy. It's said local wags call it the Monkey House, but I can't confirm that (he said, the

house quiet, *so* quiet it felt as if it and everything in it had disappeared. A Spit dog echoed a forlorn yowl.) Turn on the verandah light (my father said).

8.

CHANGE IS THE SPICE OF LIFE, MY FATHER OFTEN SAID, THOUGH I DIDN'T EXACTLY understand what he meant. It's As Good As a Holiday, though although he'd taken a day off here or there to accompany us to the beach from time to time, I couldn't remember the last time he'd taken a day off work, let alone us going away like the Fulbrights or Goodriches did, overseas to Bali or Disneyland. Illness takes no vacation, he'd said, though obstetricians do book theirs in November, when things have quietened down after the spring rush. But my father, ever the stickler for routine, didn't embrace change for change's sake. And despite suggestions he'd been much travelled in his youth, he never seemed to take many holidays either. His dedication to his profession and his patients and the District precluded it.

And our town, always unchanging, seemed to oblige him. Nothing much seemed to happen, if you considered it, and that which did happen, always happened.

Every full moon the prawns would spawn, and the trawlers would come back laden with pink, threshing flesh; every spring lambs would be born and every autumn they'd be slaughtered; school would start after Australia Day and end before Christmas; the District Races, and the various Balls, Fêtes, Galas, Shows and Carnivals marked the passing of the year, measured by lamington drives and sausage sizzles; and though it all seemed what philosophers might call eternal recurrence, the same thing happening year after year, I nevertheless drew great comfort from that predictability.

THE LAST MONTH BEFORE THE END OF SCHOOL HAD ALWAYS SEEMED TO DRAG into the past, the maddening drone of the cicadas prolonging every unbearable hot minute. Yet I was already sick with the feeling that last month was running away too fast, faster than I could catch hold of it, faster than Charlie, speeding away on her bike up to the Secret Castle.

It seemed everything I'd always assumed *just was* was changing shape too quickly, just as I couldn't help noticing Charlie and me already were too. Although I

hadn't grown any taller, I noticed how, in almost imperceptible ways — that the casual observer, someone who didn't watch her as closely as I did, wouldn't notice — that she was starting to 'grow up,' and though I didn't want to admit it, grow away.

Although she didn't say so in so many words, and of course was sensitive enough to know how I felt about her going away, I could sense in an unimaginable way how she was already packing her tuckbox for boarding school, cocking her boater, deciding what shoulder she'd wear her new school bag on, imagining all the amazing things she'd see down the Smoke. All the new friends she'd make.

Something that struck me then, and still does now, was how dream-like everything became, how everything didn't seem quite real: even though I tried not to daydream too much, the future was already mixing up with the past, making the present somehow imaginary, and somehow me too. Not even the ping of Mr Bulpitt's chalk felt real any more, nor shake the feeling that everything was already as dreamy as memory.

Somebody else was in my spot on the handball court, somebody else was plunging into the river, somebody else was walking down the Shops for their mixed bag, somebody else was asking for a Redskin or a Choo Choo Bar, somebody else gulped their lemon squash while the grownups talked around and over them about the drought and the Panther. Somebody else crooked uneasily far away in the high, once comforting elbows of the Big Fig, watching everything and seeing nothing, unable to do anything but watch, not even to whisper whatever now-forgotten secrets into its once understanding hollows, as the days grew longer and the nights swelled thicker, making it harder and harder to sleep.

Even though I ate all my dinner, I couldn't always taste it, shuffling to the verandah not even half-full; and even though the realest things I remember now were my father's case histories, even they sometimes seemed somehow made up: as though somebody else was half-listening to all the pathological detail and symptomology; somebody else was going through the motions of brushing their teeth before bed, checking for whatever could be underneath, getting in under the blanket, staring at the ceiling, lying awake all night, afraid of the lonely, restive dreams that would curdle their fitful sleep.

All I wanted was for time to stop as it did then: for everything to be as it was, as it had always been. Yet, despite subsequently painfully discovering otherwise, even

then I knew it couldn't: soon that long, mad, hot minute would be up, and the moments and hours and days and months and years and life itself would speed away with greater velocity and ferocity, until everything was over and there would be nothing left, not even memories. And as I've since found out, too much sadness and deeper regret, even for the half-living, *The Years Condemn*.

THAT YEAR, WE'D KEPT A DIARY FOR SCHOOL. AFTER THE ASSIGNMENT ENDED, I kept it up sporadically, although if you could read my diary from that time, you'd get the impression I was the saddest kid in the world. But even though historians might consider it a 'primary source' it couldn't tell you the whole story, much less the truth, because like poetry, I only wrote in it when I was sad or confused. As if it, like poetry, could ever tell the truth. And for nearly that whole entire summer, every entry read:

Woke up, felt confused, went to bed. I love her.

As if every day were exactly the same. It's only natural I should have felt confused: the Hormones were coming and everything I knew, everything I'd known before, had somehow become more complicated. Strange how careless happiness is: for all my maudlin diarising, I can only remember snatches of all the good times we'd once enjoyed: swimming down the billabong, knocking about at the Secret Castle, even winning a game of handball (but only if 'Gus' was mooching round the shelter sheds with Charlie). And my father's case histories, especially.

But how infinitesimally careful unhappiness is, even for a child, always going over the details, again and again and *again*. Though the past slips away from me more and more and ever more and more quickly, and my memory is now not what it once was, even after the amnesia, I remember almost everything of that summer, as if, stashed under the unmade bed in a dusty room at the end of that long, dark corridor in my heart, there's a secret box, filled with my own growing collection of brittle fears and yellowing regrets. Writing it down only made it *seem* realer, if not any more reliable.

Perhaps I took as much after our mother as my brother, smallness aside. By the end of that summer, we all of us — us three, anyway — seemed to tend our paltry little plots of sorrow with equally unsung dedication, jealously watching every tenuous little mouse-print flutter in the erratic Black Cat's paw.

If I were less like my father and more ironically-inclined, I'd probably be the first to crack up at my life's paradox: that I can never remember whatever I need most to remember as well as I wish I ever could, and I cannot forget whatever I want most to forget.

TRUTH BE TOLD, CHANCE FRIGHTENED ME AS MUCH AS CHANGE. I DIDN'T LIKE NOT knowing what might happen next, especially given the comforting reassurance of our daily routine. I suppose that's what made it all so troubling: it was if, sailing unconcerned on the smooth and direct currents of a familiar coast, we'd come adrift, not knowing where the rocks and rapids were, careening towards dangerous, unseen reefs, into the gaping maws of the here be panthers, the light in the tower failed, all of us smashed against the cruel, ravenous rocks, just like the old wreck out past Mystery Bay had ended up, nearly all hands lost. Once, we'd driven out to the lighthouse at low tide, when the water was too silty and weedy for swimming, and caught sight of its poor, rusting skeleton, the ribs of its shell pointing accusingly out of the snotty foam, and I remember being terribly frightened by the drowned souls crying out from its dark, salty corners.

SO ALTHOUGH IT WAS THE ONE THING THAT MADE EVERYBODY IN THE DISTRICT forget the drought and the Panther for a day — even if only because they all got rip-roaring blotto, coming down from what little lambing there was or whatever trawling there was left, to fill up all three pubs with heady, fizzy excitement, I dreaded the Melbourne Cup, and not just because I was terrified of horses.

I dreaded that nervous, frothy expectation that lathered me in anticipation and drenched me in disappointment, though if Doon Pub was anything to go by, it was

hard to tell the difference between the celebrating and blueing: the voices were all thick and slurry and raucous, like bickering galahs.

That last Melbourne Cup, after we'd picked our horses out of Mr Bulpitt's battered Akubra, I was stricken by doubt. With my bad maths, I could never work out the odds, and the arcane abbreviations and figures in Uncle Bob's pink form guide only perplexed me. 11 to 1, 3 to 2 even, 1 to 3 on... I couldn't quite work out what the pot was, but it was so unaccountable, it sounded like a pretty decent wedge, as Uncle Bob would say, rushing to make a call.

I couldn't help being fixated on my horse's name on the sweep sheet Mr Bulpitt had pinned to the blackboard. I didn't like the name: what did Shiva's Revenge mean? Was it as bad as Montezuma's, for which my father had once treated those Siamese twins? Besides, Let's Elope reminded me of my parents. Maybe one day, Charlie and me would elope, even if we never left town. My mind leapt away from me, galloping ahead to that afternoon after I'd won the sweep, sharing a spearmint milkshake down Matey's, my shout, of course.

Let's Elope was Angus Day's horse, of course. I sidled over at little lunch. Usually, swapping involved appraisal and negotiation — you didn't want to swap for less than you have, though like the Jindy Mob's ancestors, I wasn't much of a bargainer. All I had was my unlucky ticket and a special spag marble to sweeten the deal.

But Angus Day didn't mind at all. With a bright wide smile that made me bilious, he gave me his ticket, no worries, and when we got back to class, I saw with burning cheeks that our names had already been swapped. His bright smile, wishing me good luck, made me feel sick, as though I'd made a terrible mistake.

And out of the gate and down the straight... we all crowded round Mr Bulpitt's desk as the caller droned on. I couldn't — still can't — follow that nasal thrum of unpronounceable words and unreckonable numbers. How did he breathe? Had he taken a breath? Trying to listen to the torrent, surrounded by everyone's cheering, hearing the clamour from the pubs, was too difficult, like trying to shake meaning out of a tin of noise, like one of those Cows in a Can, which would moo as you turned it over and over. I think I caught Let's Elope in the lead up to the final straight, and I thought of how gracious I'd be in victory, not making too much of a song and dance about it, like Shane Brownlow had last year, rubbing his winning ticket in

everybody's faces till Mr Bulpitt sent him outside to calm down. If I had some change from buying Charlie and me a milkshake, I might even buy Angus Day a Redskin or even a pack of lolly Fags — he *had* swapped after all.

But before I knew it, it was all over. You couldn't hear a thing for the clamour from the pubs, as whooping winners bought rounds and losers cursed their stubs, flung into the dust. And Angus Day, smiling, as Mr Bulpitt handed him the money.

The worst part was that when Angus Day bought Charlie a spearmint milkshake down Matey's that arvo, he bought me a milkshake too. Banana. It clagged in my throat, and I tried not to gag when Charlie doubled up about the swap.

— Ya nong, she laughed. At least one of us won, though, and that's the main thing, ay? Yew share mine, Gusso, and they drank, foreheads together, just like in the movies.

I tried to smile but my lips stuck to my lonely straw, furry with banana. Even now, I couldn't tell you why I'd asked for it — I've always hated bananas. Every sickly, cloying mouthful just reminded me more of my foolishness, and ever since, regret has always tasted of banana milkshake.

Perhaps it was better not to hope things would get better, even more so than fearing that they might get worse. Perhaps at least pessimism offered the grim satisfaction of at least not being wrong, while optimism often just led to disappointment, even when your wish was granted.

I hated not knowing what would happen next, now that that Charlie was going away, much less slinking through Matey's tinkling bead curtain with 'Gusso.'

Everything I'd known was changing, the odds were lengthening, and everything was racing away from me, even before I'd even made it out of the gates. Whatever the odds, life seemed so terribly unfair, the stakes stacked against me. But then, as Mr Fraser, the Opposition Leader said — although I think my father did too, whenever he saw me disappointed or disheartened — Life Wasn't Meant To Be Easy.

Lucky At Cards, Unlucky In Love, my father used to say, though he never took any interest in my mother's craze for the tarot cards during that particular phase. And even now, it strikes me as unfair that my hopelessness at cards never brought me the love I desired, any more than the tarots brought my mother happiness. My only

consolation was that I might be lucky in love, if horse racing was the same as cards. Didn't seem likely now, though.

But perhaps that's why, my hopelessness at cards, my fear of horses and my distrust of chance aside, like my father, I'm no gambler.

WORD ROUND TOWN WAS UNCLE BOB KEPT HIMSELF IN BEER MONEY — AND QUITE a bit besides — taking quiet punts on the shoosh. He knew, whispered Matey, the famous jockey George Mulley. He worked from home, except on race days, when he'd install himself in Middle Pub's back bar, a pack of Cravens smouldering in the ashtray and a pony of Tooheys close by, scribbling cryptic figures in a small spiral notebook as the callers droned on and on. There were rumours that his Book — the big red and black ledger he was rumoured to keep locked up in the wardrobe — was worth as much as Mr Fulbright, and that was saying something. Everybody owed Uncle Bob.

But though he showered attention on the hydrangeas and carnations, and though the house and Neville, his concrete abo, were always brightly, freshly painted (our mother swore she'd seen him take the stones out of the driveway and wash them in the moonlight), you'd never guess what he was worth. Aunty Flo would complain about his miserliness — Cheaper than a two-bob watch — as our mother, then under the unpredictable spell of clairvoyancy, read her tea leaves.

When he found out over cordial and Golliwogs who I'd backed in the race, he was sympathetic. Let's Elope wasn't a bad nag — she'd had decent form, a good bloodline. And she'd made a cracking start — 'Ad me goin' fer a bit there! said Uncle Bob.

When I asked him how he knew if a horse was a winner, he laughed.

— Well, if I knew, I wouldn't be out watering the hydrangeas, would I? I'd pay some other galah to do it fer me!

He looked at me, down in my cordial cup, as the afternoon stretched out beyond the kitchen windows like bleached sheets, hanging stiff and lifeless on the line.

— A horse is a funny thing. You can work out his bloodline and his grandsire and sire might've been real flyers, but in the end, no amount of history or pedigree'll ever be certain — it's all down to the horse on the day. Lot like people, I s'pose. Who can say why she didn't finish? Maybe she didn't have it in 'er. Maybe 'er jockey pushed 'er too hard at the start. It's not how you come out of the gates, it's how you cross the line, he said, tapping the side of his nose. But it's a long, long race, the Cup, and it's what you do on the way that determines where you finish up. Like life, I s'pose. Gee, I think I need a beer — all this philosophising is makin' me thirsty!

I wasn't sure what he meant either, and like most of the things grown-ups say to make you feel better, it only confused me more. But history and blood didn't seem any more unreliable predictors than the name or the odds.

Even Neville looked likely to dissolve outside in the spent, breathless air, the hydrangeas flagging. The cool sappy smell that normally drenched the shadows this time of year had evaporated, leaving only a gritty, salty taste, faintly reminiscent of banana milkshake.

Case History No. 9: Severe Hypo-thyroidic Thrombocytopenic Urticarious Heat Exchange Disorder

ONCE THERE WAS A WOMAN (MY FATHER BEGAN, AS A SHARP BREEZE BLEW THE glowering sunset from his face) who, as a result of a number of coincidental confluences, became so severely intolerant to heat that she eventually had to live in the deep freeze down the abattoir.

After her mother had run off with a defrocked vicar, she'd continued to keep house for her elderly father, who'd once been one of the District's biggest and shrewdest timber merchants. They lived out Wimboola way, one of the few white families left, on a spur past the banana-thick hills, down a long, rutted dirt track most folk didn't bother driving down any more.

She didn't get out much: her father, a domineering martinet, had never let her out before he died (he said as my brother laughed in a way, which, if I could described it accurately, seemed to swell with emptiness). Hard work and her father's cold strictness had aged her — or rather, *erased* her, so you could only make out a sketch of her even as she stared you in the face in the gloom of the old homestead, the curtains always drawn.

Not that she did that much. But one afternoon, on my way back from Gidgeree (where there'd been an utterly fascinating case of methaemoglobinaemia, or blue man syndrome — but that's another story...) I had to call in — flat tyre, and I needed to get a hold of Barry Munday. No answer! Peeking anxiously from behind the front door, her eyes were so wide they almost popped out. And it wasn't because she wasn't used to greeting visitors (she wasn't) but because, even from that trembling slice of door, anyone (well, anyone qualified) could see she was hyperthyroidic, a goitre already starting to spread its clenching fingers round her neck.

I drew some blood from her for further tests: we'd just gotten a new endocrinograph machine at the Base Hospital and Sister Gloria was dying to try it out. It turned out she had Graves' Disease, which is difficult for even the most professional and perceptive prognosticians to identify definitively. But that explained the anxiousness, the shyness, the fluttering heart.' She'd been forgetting things, leaving the laundry out or not feeding the chooks, and though she presented with

many of the classic symptoms, including a propensity to cry at the drop of a hat and constant fidgetiness, it was hard to determine if her emotional lability was the result of the disease or having been brought up under her father's shadow. Graves' disease is, like cancer, an auto-immune disease; strange to think that the very antibodies the body produces to protect itself can destroy it too. But then, don't many such protections often prove the most disastrous? The locked door in a fire, the vicious guard dog, the fear of a broken heart...

Initially, I prescribed a course of radio-iodine to reduce the swelling and symptoms, with additional B vitamins and the possibility of thyroidectomy surgery in the event that the iodine treatment wasn't sufficient. However, I did recommend a course of additional medication, the same I give many of my patients with similar symptoms, to address the patho-psychological symptoms (forgetfulness, anxiousness, fidgety listlessness). But, as noted earlier, it was difficult to distinguish in that miserable house whether the Graves' was solely responsible for her dejection.

When I returned a couple of weeks later, the door was locked and all the curtains drawn. It looked as if nobody was home. I let myself in. She was in tears in the bath, covered in red, raw weals the colour of blood and rippling under the water like slow-moving sea creatures. Whole continents of hives, trembling with barely contained fury. It was all she could do not to scratch herself to ribbons. It wasn't merely miliaria bruria, or prickly heat: this looked like a serious case of Graves' related heat-induced urticaria, or hives. It was a hot summer that year, everything the colour and crackle of a struck match. Though not quite as hot as this year (he said, his tumbler clacking with fresh ice, as he wiped his neck with a damp face washer, his forehead as dewy as his tumbler, while we panted in the kindling gloaming). She told me in a throttled voice how all that itching was like being bombarded with thousands of unanswerable questions, driving her loopy.

And it wasn't just any kind of common heat-induced urticaria. It was heat-induced dermographic urticaria, which meant that due to the dermis's mast cells being affected by histamine release, the welts followed the line of the scratch: you could write your name on the patient's back and it would rise, hot and red and swollen, floating on her vertebrae as if written on water. Although all she saw were those hectoring demands, eluding her attempts to ignore them by slipping into places she hadn't even considered.

Of course, one of the main symptoms of Graves is heat intolerance, but further spectrographic tests revealed that she'd somehow suffered some kind of heat stroke and was now completely intolerant to any temperature above cold bathwater. She'd get such dizzying headaches she'd put her head in the freezer while the chops and peas dribbled to mush about her ears. She couldn't sit in the bath all day — the dangers of water over-exposure are many, including fungal infestations, nail separation and loss of skin elasticity. She had to be in a climate controlled environment below five degrees to allow her skin to heal and to slow her metabolism enough to quell the effects of the Graves' disease and the medications she was taking. It's a shame Mr Briskett's shop wasn't empty at the time, but then, perhaps it wasn't. And she could hardly move to the South Pole!

But it turned out, what with the drought and the abattoir starting to slow down, even then, we could stow her in a spare cold storage room, for which she paid a nominal rent. She'd set up a very nice little apartment in there, with a number of those little feminine touches that might make such a bleak house a little homelier. And it turned out that the cold brought on a noticeable change in her condition. Although she could no longer go out in the sun, the excess of Vitamins A & D produced by her condition meant she did not suffer any adverse effects other than a thinning of the skin: you could see her pulse in a certain light, and in others, those organs close to the skin secreting, especially as, due to her condition, she couldn't really wear clothes: any warmth at all could set the rash off again.

Matey delivered her groceries and she never wanted for chops again, though given her heat allergy, she preferred salads and cold cuts. She'd throw on a visitors' robe, when Matey or I or the abattoir manager came round for the rent, and although when word got round she was 'in the nuddie' down the freezer it attracted a number of the District's dirty old blokes and rampant young fellas, the abattoir night manager put a swift end to that.

You had to be careful not to leave the door open too long when you went in to see her, or else the warm braw outside would brush itself over her with blistery splashes. You couldn't watch telly or listen to the radio in there: the transistors would freeze up.

(and, as my brother would loudly point out down the bus stop, there wasn't much to listen to on 2MT, the local radio out of Borrigal, which only ever played country music and stock and station reports)

But by all accounts, she was a voracious reader, especially enjoying the kind of romantic novels your mother apparently enjoys (he said, as the fridge started humming in the kitchen). And Mrs Day thought she was nice, if a bit odd, whenever she popped in for a natter and an iced tea at the end of her shift.

Anyway you can imagine my surprise when Matey turned up at the surgery, as though he'd seen a ghost. You could smell the barbecue from the Borrigal Road. There hadn't been a party: the abattoir looked empty: you couldn't hear a thing (unlike slaughtering, when the cries of those condemned animals in the yards over the relentless scream of the saws was unbearable).

I can only verify what I saw: with so few remains available, it was impossible to test them for the cause of death. For most dead souls, the certificate is straight forward enough: *Death caused by terminal cancer*, or *Death caused by myocardial infarction*, or *Death by kangaroo tail*, or *lawnmower*, or *misadventure*, or *suicide*, or *whatever*. I knew what Matey and I saw: the freezer apartment as dim and bare and neat as it always was. She didn't have much by way of possessions. But the visitors' gown she'd throw on when Matey or I came to call was still hanging on the back of the door like a side of meat, and nothing else was touched. It was one of those cheap silk Filipino kimonos, a shimmering panther (of all things!) embroidered on the back. She used to draw it over herself with crossed arms, her modesty starting to bloom out of the sleeves.

All that remained of her was a white spot surrounded by a sooty spray, like a paper circle had been spray painted, the way they allege Boyd Moran re-sprayed all those cars he'd stolen down Bingle's panel beaters. Except in this circle was the outline of her feet, like one of those paper mats Bingle's put in after an oil change. Nothing else: not a fingerprint: not even teeth.

Now, that freezer's door had been modified by Barry Munday himself to lock from the inside to give the Ice Dolly (as some dirty, rampant wags called her down Doon Pub) some privacy. I am aware the phenomenon known as Spontaneous Human Combustion does have some anecdotal precedents, along with examples in both medical and fictional literature. Mr Bulpitt mentioned something about Charles

Dickens and Jules Verne and a Russian — Goggle? Does that sound right? You know what I'm like with names, especially foreign ones — though I *can* recall the work done by Merille and Muraire on the phenomenon in the *Journal de Medicine*...

Some have suggested that such spontaneous combustion is the result of victims sitting too close to the electric fire, or falling asleep in bed while smoking (that filthy habit), or after drinking strong spirits like, uh, vodka or rum (he said, putting his glass down for a moment, leaving a wet ring on the verandah). Some possible explanations have included that of 'wicking' in which subcutaneous fat ignites during combustion. But the patient didn't smoke or drink, and given her hyperthyroidism, she didn't have much fat, if any, to burn. And the so-called wicking effect can only occur in draughty conditions: although there was sufficient air supply in the freezer, it was properly draught-proofed.

Who can say what happened? The world is full of mysteries: life itself is the greatest one of all. Before you're you, so much has to happen. Some of it you determine by your own choices and actions; but so much is determined by other people — and other chances. Not just when you're born, or where, or even to whom. Before that victorious spermatozoa of millions makes it to that one egg of thousands, one man and one woman of millions must meet and fall in love. And that depends on where they were, when they met, how they met, where they came from. And that depends on their parents, and their parents' parents, and so on and so on, until who can ever know where it all started? Who can say how it began, if we don't know who began begetting?

And even then, the chances of conception are miniscule: for all that spermatozoa and all those eggs, how many countless hundreds and thousands are lost before life begins (although you wouldn't know that, looking at Molly Moran, all those kids, and another on the way)? It's strange and wondrous, too, to think that just as you're born with all your teeth — the adult ones tucked up in your cheeks, even in the womb — girls are born with all their eggs, and only some of them will ever be children. Like you! But even then, the odds that there won't be some genetic abnormality — Down's Syndrome, Gardner's Syndrome, hare lips, hydrocephaly, flat feet, whatever — folded into the foetus. Every healthy child is a kind of miracle...

(the only times I ever heard my father rhapsodise thus — apart from his wine patter — was discussing the human body. His fascination and dedication were almost religious, though he wouldn't have described it in such irrational terms)

But just as hereditary characteristics are passed on like a story told and retold and retold for generations and generations, so that the details change, ever so subtly, until although you can catch a snatch of an original detail here and there, each of us become our own story, the whispers of previous versions, the drafts and revisions, growing fainter and fainter until they can barely be heard. And that's the point, isn't it? The story lives by changing, just as all living things must adapt to survive, so that in the end, it becomes its own story: *your* story.

(I often wondered what my father meant by this. One of the hardest things about drafting my story — such as it was, such as it is — was trying to imagine it without knowing anything of my parents'. It was like making it all up as I went along, with no notes or previous drafts to go by. Editing, as I'd discover in the course of my research, was far easier: medically, for example, it's much easier to amputate or remove a diseased part than to try to save it or graft it or transplant it, as Doctor Barnard had recently discovered in South Africa.

In comparison to a body, created out of a meeting of two people and an egg and a sperm, cells dividing into their constituent parts, so that this becomes an eye, that a nose, those a heart, cradled by lungs and ribs; the liver nestled in the guts, the brain balanced on the spine, a story — the story of a life — seemed a chaotic, confusing jumble of misremembered details, especially in my case, with such disconnected parts to constitute it, everything drained of cause and effect. And meaning.

In a body, all those bones and muscles and nerves and glands, secreting and excreting, contracting and expanding, carrying within them the shape and colour of your parents and your parents' parents and all before them, oblivious, in darkness, constant — or until you fell sick or they stopped. The pancreas of a bitter old man making too much insulin; the skin of his dutiful daughter inscribed with whatever faulty chromosome inflicted her painful, imprisoning rash; the faint sketches of my father's nose, our mother's lips, his shadiness, her smallness.

As my father always said, a human body is merely a random cocktail of chemicals: iron and water and potassium and hydrochloric acid; hair and skin and blood and sweat and fat; livers and hearts and lungs and eyes. These ingredients,

unconstituted, could be thrown together in a bucket. However, these were not the essence of a body, of a human being, any more than the ‘facts’ or ‘details’ are the essence of a story.

A body is no more a person than a collection of clippings or letters or anecdotes is, whatever the story. I’m hoping. But like my father, I’m not normally given to philosophising or metaphorising — if there is such a thing — and I fear I may have overextended the analogy, whatever it is. Writing, as I’ve discovered, with its omissions and discrepancies, cannot compare to medicine’s rigour and exactitude. Much less life’s.

And yet it was hard for me to imagine who I’d be, where I’d be, with whom I’d be, what I’d become, or make, or anything, when I could not imagine how they’d done it. And that was without considering my hot, furious embarrassment when my brother, later discovering what I’d been up to in the study, told me in smug, sickening detail. If the questions I had about everything were like itchiness burning itself under my skin, the scratch, in that case, only drew blood. As I’d later learn in hospital, or the Ice Dolly had in the bath, you had to do what you could to ignore the itch if you wanted to save your skin, no matter how noisily it droned in your thoughts.

As if knowing what I was thinking — despite my brother, now noisily flicking through an old copy of *Go-Set* — my father continued):

I felt very sorry for her, the Ice Dolly. I wondered if she’d ever loved, or been loved. I felt for her the way she went — for want of a better expression — from the frying pan to the fire: from that gloomy homestead into cold storage. Parents love their children unconditionally: there’s enough angry mothers down the District Court protesting their kids’ innocence to testify to that. Her duty to her father was really admirable before he died. You don’t see much of that nowadays (he said, not looking at my brother). Now it’s nursing homes and Meals on Wheels. Of course, no reasonable parent would want to be a burden to their children: if I ever am, you won’t see me for dust. The father, by all accounts, wasn’t as reasonable or considerate, but I wonder if her dedication to him was one of love, or fear? Not that I’d have asked her: I’m no psychiatrist (regardless of the psycho-pathological symptoms of Graves). But I guess, much like the question, I’d never discover the answer now.

But what really impressed me was her stoicism in the face of her condition and its incurability. She didn’t complain, didn’t want to grumble, accepted it in the end. If

only all my patients were so understanding! But now everybody wants a quick cure, without having to take all the tablets or do all the exercises. Much less give up smoking... But I suppose, given how hot that summer was, what choice was there? It must have been a great relief not to be itchy all the time — a feeling, I think almost as existentially awful as nausea (he said with a shudder, slapping a mosquito on his arm) — to be in her own skin, naked as the day she was born.

And though her end sounds gruesome, it would have been a pretty quick one: as my post mortem report noted, if she'd been in pain or burned for a while, there'd be scorch marks all over the freezer as she writhed around. But it was just that blank circle, two small feet inside it, like twins in a womb, or one of those solar eclipses, the light swallowed by darkness.

And she never minded being in the freezer. She'd never been used to company, and she couldn't spend much time with another person without getting itchy — their body temperature would raise the freezer's ambient temperature only perceptibly enough for her noisy skin — so Mrs Day knew it was time to shake a leg long before she'd finished her iced tea.

Having been lonely for so long, the Ice Dolly had gotten more used to being alone. Nobody — not Mrs Day, not even me, her physician — could say they really knew her.

She told me she liked the peace and quiet, in that gloomy, dark, cold, free to do nothing but read of places she'd never go and people who didn't exist, free of the demands of her father and the chores, right to the end. When we found her, we found a book — one of those thick Russians your mother likes — a little away from the circle. By that fellow. What's his name? Googol? I forget the name of the book. But it was, the panther robe and a few other personal effects aside, all that was left of her (although I know for ages they only opened that freezer during the day — you know how superstitious boners are!).

And after the inquest declared an open finding, I was left to certify *Causes Unknown*. As if that explained it, as if it said anything at all (he said, to the kitchen's deafening silence).

9.

ALL THOSE GLANDS AND ORGANS, ALL THAT FLESH, THOSE INTRICATE LINES OF nerves and veins and fingerprints: even God counted every hair on your head, Mr Bulpitt said (though my father snorted when he heard that! Of course, he said, God would have an easier time counting the hair on Old Earl's head, wouldn't he? Though half the time He spent would be looking for it...)

My father, hitting his stride on the verandah, would remind us that a good story was like a body, and to get to its essence, one must get under the skin, past the hair and fat, into the marrow and flesh.

And to understand the body (like a story, he'd point out, warming to the allusion as he was warmed by another whisky) one has to steep their fingers into its ingredients: feel them stick in snail lines, the bitter salty sweet tang clot under their fingernails.

As he often noted, a human body's merely a random cocktail of chemicals: iron and water and potassium and hydrochloric acid; hair and skin and blood and sweat and fat; livers and hearts and lungs and eyes. These ingredients, unconstituted, could be thrown together in a bucket. However, these were not the essence of a body, of a human being, any more than the 'facts' or 'details' are the essence of a story, he asserted.

We may look at long dead organs, non-functioning like the chops on your dinner plate; but that'd miss the point, he'd say, waving his knife in punctuation. It's by remembering the life once in 'em, admiring the intelligence of their design, and noting their purpose, that we remember ours.

I flicked through the *Grey's Anatomy* in his study, skipping the electrical diagrams of the nervous and circulatory systems, dwelling for a moment on the once-terrifying skeleton, the saveloy-fat gastro-intestinal tract. I flicked past the snail-like cochlea, picking up speed to the Secret. I remember once my father pointing out where everything was on my body. I'd put my hand where I thought it was, and he'd jab the correct point. The kidneys were much lower down; the stomach much higher up. And the heart, over which I'd put my hand, wasn't in your centre, in your middle, but off to the side, askew.

My father told me some people were born with their organs in the wrong place, the opposite to everybody else. Hard to operate on them, he said. You had to hold a mirror up over the incision so you didn't get the wrong ventricle. Situs invertus, it was called. Sometimes, in rare cases — situs ambiguous — you couldn't even find it all. How he laughed when I asked if people without hearts ever fell in love.

How complicated, how mysterious, how tangled up our insides were! It never ceased to amaze me — or confuse me. Especially the Secret. I'd finally reached my destination, and a tingle of excitement thrilled in me, a nervous secretion that made my fingers dizzy. But no matter how hard I tried to make sense of it, I was only left more confused, as though I'd been trying to assemble a model airplane with too much glue, going by instructions in an inscrutable script. It didn't make sense.

My breath shallow and hoarse, as though I'd run a long race, all I could hear my heart thudding, echoing in all the cramped spaces in my chest. I put the *Grey's Anatomy* away, hoping my father wouldn't notice the mysterious dog-ear on the Secret page. I stamped out the wrinkle in the rug, and made sure I'd left no trace, not even a fingerprint.

WHEN I WAS ONLY A LITTLE — A 'PICCANINNY,' AS UNCLE BOB CALLED ME then — the story I remember most (before my father started telling us his case histories) was that of the ugly duckling. I thought of that duckling, scorned by its anatine siblings, discovering it was really a magnificent swan, the king of the lake. I wondered if I'd ever become beautiful or graceful, given how little I took after our mother. With Charlie often busy with this or that and getting ready for boarding school and what-not, I'd often find myself as much down the Long Jetty as up the Big Fig, brooding in the sourish breeze as it wheezed along the Spit. I'd watch the trawlers disappear into the blanched horizon, the seagulls squalling as they followed the catch. Only the black swan remained, bound to a tyre that would never love it back, oblivious to the swan's yearning as it glissaded on the glistening water, the pelicans fading from view. I wondered how it had gotten here, why it stayed here, so far from its own beautiful family to waste its days with the discordant gulls, who'd screech hysterically any time it approached them; and I'd dream of the alien waters that lapped its own distant shores, as I cowered in the slumberous heavy air. Then Kenny would clang the dock bell, and I'd remember the time, and rush home in time for dinner.

THE OLDER I'VE GOTTEN, THE MORE DISTANT THE PAST BECOMES, THE MORE unsure I am of the distinctions between memory and imagination, when everything I *can* remember seems as vivid as a dream, even a half-forgotten one. And although I cannot really remember much of any of the previous such days, or any after, I'll never forget that Remembrance Day.

As the school bell *dong... dong... dong... dong... dong... dong... dong... dong... dong... dong... donged* and stop the whole wide world at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, everyone stood silent, our heads bowed, balls dropped, skipping ropes stilled, even the breeze holding its breath for that memorial moment, when we remembered the Glorious Dead who had — lest we ever forgot — succumbed to the distant perils of the battlefield, sea and air to defend our cherished way of life. But that day, the eleventh day of the eleventh month of my eleventh year, even that hot minute of silence crackled with desperate, excited whispers, which even us nippers could hear faint, troubling echoes of that silenced morning, along with the dogs and the grown-ups.

Although Mr Tuttle had stopped shuffling on the Middle Pub verandah, his hat on his unreliable heart, you could see the way his eyes skittered towards the bar door. Matey leaned at the doorway of the Milk Bar, watching something, looking nowhere. A crow farked obliviously disrespectfully, swelling that restive silence, echoed by what sounded like Gunna's mad raving in the distance.

Lest We Ever Forgot The Glorious Dead, Brave And True And Faithful, who willing laid down their lives succumbing to the perils of the battlefield, the deep or air. According to Mr Bulpitt, we had to reflect on the dauntless courage of their labour and sacrifice, praying that their spirit would live on in us and in generations to come, and that they would be given eternal rest in that place of light from which sorry and mourning were far banished.

There was something else about the homeless and refugees, or was it those who'd been dispossessed and lost their employment? Those whose families had been disrupted, mourning the loss of loved ones? In remembering and recognising the Glorious Dead's willing sacrifice, their fight for truth, we had to beseech the Father to take us in His hand to make us take up the spirit of service and follow their shining example in faithfulness and endurance, that we might with them be found worthy.

(despite the drama that followed that day, when my father heard what Mr Bulpitt had instructed us to think and pray and believe, he made it clear — in no uncertain terms as diplomatically and discreetly as he could — that while such sentiments were unimpeachable, they were undermined by such silly superstitions or religious fervour; notwithstanding that state schools were, by law, meant to be secular. Mr Bulpitt's response was not reported, though I felt what I suspected it might have been with even more chalk-pings to my sleepy cheeks that last month)

The Heroic Dead: They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. Their monument, the Cenotaph, stood garlanded with rosemary and poppies, momentarily remembered, unlike the rest of the year, when it stood silent and sad, circled by donuts that hoons or Morans did round it after Doon Pub shut, Big Kel's shrewish wife Glennys screeching from the upstairs room.

The Heroic Dead. Unlike the barely legible scratchings on those old gravestones lurching like broken teeth in the high, yellow, weedy waste of the old churchyard, the names of the Heroic Dead (though they themselves were buried in the foreign soil of distant lands), still glistened in the bleachy sun, just as Angus Day's did on the honour rolls in the old church hall. Unlike mine.

(as I may have mentioned, our family's name wasn't on the roster of Fulbrights and Goodriches and Brownlows and Wilsons and even the odd Moran. But then neither were there any Shillingsworths, despite Nigger getting a medal along with his pension and madness)

I didn't want die forgotten, buried along with my name, but I didn't want to die to be remembered either. I wanted to be older — to do and say and think as I wished, when I wished, how I wished — but getting older also meant whatever lay in store for me at Big School, on that bone-shaking, heart-breaking ride down the Borrigal Road. And while every year older meant a year closer to adulthood, it also meant a year closer to death, just as every day wasn't just a day closer to the holidays, but a day closer to Charlie's departure. Live Every Day As If It Were Your Last, my father would say, but if I did, I'd cry even more than I did now, watering the knobbed secret hole in the Big Fig with my hot, fuddled tears. I wrote a lot of secrets that summer in such briny water, as thick and sticky and evanescent as cicada blood.

I didn't want to be remembered from far away; I didn't want to change; I didn't want anything to change, least of all Charlie. I didn't want time to keep marching on, the present coagulating too quickly into the past, the future seeping into the wounds left behind. As Charlie already was leaving me behind too.

Even as that eternal moment held its breath, the world's feverish, unconscious spinning wouldn't allow time to stand still: already it was twitching, barely able to contain itself, like Gunna, jumping from foot to foot as though he were skipping on hot sand, threatening to make us lose our footing and fling us into space. Then the bell dinged again, and the moment passed, as if it had never even happened, and everything that was was already forgotten, Charlie and Angus Day furtively holding hands by the bubblers.

And as I've since discovered, it's only the dead, glorious or otherwise, who stay the same, bathed in shining, sentimental nostalgia: the living, the farewelled, the ones left behind, shall always be wearied by age, just as the years will always condemn them. They did me.

I OFTEN WONDERED WHY REMEMBRANCE DAY WASN'T NEATER: THE ELEVENTH minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, even the eleventh second. Despite my bad maths that eleventh year, I could see all those ones, standing to attention like tin soldiers, all together yet apart: 11:11:11 11/11. It didn't seem to add up, but then nothing ever did, then. Or ever would.

After all, the week before, we'd tried to remember remember the fifth of November (although I always forgot most of it after that, except that *'he was caught with a dark lantern and lighted match. Holler boys, holler boys, let the bells ring, holler boys, holler boys, something something thing...*) but with the fire ban there was no Cracker Night this year. I'd always been terrified of the crackers — the skidding catherine wheels, the unpredictable roman candles, the effusive fountains — and someone, maybe Skinny Goodrich, told me that a Moran (though he couldn't say which one) had lost his hands after waving a cracker too long. I'd stand as far as I could from the bonfire while all those old newspapers and the faux guy went up in flames, the night thick with that bitter, burntness and the yelps of the dogs down the Creek. But this year, though I can't tell you how relieved I was that I didn't have to endure the possibility of limblessness, blindness or deafness, it seemed sad that with

the night passing without incident, we'd forgotten it completely — until everyone and their dog was woken round midnight by a suspicious, gunpowder yowl from the creek.

BUT THAT REMEMBRANCE DAY, THERE WERE BIGGER FISH TO FRY, AS THEY'D SAY down the Long Jetty. Even Mr Bulpitt seemed distracted (though, sadly, there was nobody on hand to ping him about it), and he dismissed us before lunch, rushing off to Middle Pub to join everyone else who'd gathered, restive and jumpy, to watch the idiot box over the bar.

The whole town was stiller and emptier than normal, as if the Glorious Dead's silent minute had thrown a shroud over the laundry-bleached afternoon. All the Shops were shut, and all you could hear was the faint, disquieting murmur of idiot boxes, all speaking in a language I could barely make sense of. Despite my best efforts, I could never quite get through all the news with my father, who, like our mother watching *Countdown*, was forced to watch it on his own, while I tried to stay out of the way in the kitchen and guess what she'd cooked up for dinner.

So though I recognised some of the faces on-screen, I had no clue what was happening — though that was a sensation I was getting more and more acquainted with, if no less confusing for its increasing familiarity.

I didn't discover any more when I dropped by Top Pub to find Old Earl, Mr Goodrich the Solicitor, Mr Horsley the Vet and even Old Earl's wife, the Duchess, all glued to the telly. My father was out on rounds down Borrigan way.

—Shoosh, love, hissed the Duchess.

I didn't even get a squash pony, which was saying something (and which I didn't in any case).

Nobody was home, my brother who knew where and our mother next door, crouching pensively around the idiot box with Uncle Bob and Aunty Flo. I got shooshed there too, so I withdrew to the Big Fig, which seemed as distracted and distant as everyone and everything else.

Later that evening, as we ate Long Jetty fish and chips while our mother sobbed in her room, my father explained that the Prime Minister, whom I remembered from when I'd had to hand out pamphlets and buttons, singing *It's Time* at Little School a couple of years before, had been dismissed by the Governor-General. I couldn't see why it was so portentous, though in hindsight I should have.

Not just because one of the few times I ever saw my parents exchanging words in a quiet little chat was when my mother, uncharacteristically bubbly at Luncheon (thanks to Mr Goodrich's Blue Nun *liebfraumilch*) laughing uproariously at something reported in *The Australian*: on being told by the leader of the Country Party that he was 'a country member,' the Prime Minister responded 'How could we ever forget?' (or something like that. No! It was 'yes, we remember').

My father's face darkened cloudy at the other end of the table; I didn't get the joke either (for all her other wonderful attributes, our mother possibly didn't have as quite as well-developed a sense of humour as my father).

On that meandering walk home, the evening starting to crack and shed light like a snake would its skin, our mother hiccupping that tuneless tune as she leaned on my brother, my father intimated that it was Unbecoming for the Doc's wife. I've worked too hard to make a solid reputation in this District and I will not have a drunken tart pissing it all away.

I can't remember what our mother said in rebuttal, but she must have been spewing, even beyond what she'd chucked up into Uncle Bob's hydrangeas as my father stormed into his study for a much-needed *digestif*, my brother holding her hair out of her face and glaring darkly at the slammed front door.

But it ended in that unforgettably long silence, which, in so many (or few) words, sucked the future's darkness and everything else into it, like one of those unbelievable, inconceivable black holes that had terrified me in *The Reader's Digest Book of Strange Stories, Amazing Facts*, where even the stars, always so starry in the times of our darkness, were snatched into the innermost heart of a well-spring hidden from sight, locked with that key she kept hung around her neck.

BUT IF THE PRIME MINISTER COULD BE SO EASILY DISMISSED, WAS ANYBODY SAFE?
Looking back now, I can see my father's politics leaned towards the conservative,

reflecting his moderate, traditional inclinations, just as our mother's veered toward the liberal; though the confusingness of politics that year meant that my father's party were Liberals, and our mother's, according to my father and the other wise heads down Top Pub, Reckless and Irresponsible. Knocking about with darkie conmen; giving Abos ideas above their station; making it illegal to use ordinary, good old-fashioned words like coon or boong or slope or even Chinaman, millions of whom Gough the Bastard was flooding the country with — or some of his hippier, trippier, pinkier cadres were rooting. And what happened when he introduced no-fault divorce? Beryl Briskett off like a shot fox, and poor old Bob hanging in the cooler out the back of the shop, which still stood empty, ghostly, the faint, eviscerating scent of waxy flesh and despair leeching out from its cobwebby windows. Good riddance to bad rubbish, as they'd say down the abattoir, though you couldn't be sure if they were talking about the Labor Party or the Brisketts.

Everywhere, everything changing faster than pillarsa the community like my father and his peers down Top Pub could imagine it, what we'd always known now somehow provisional and tenuous, as though everything we'd remembered wasn't just misremembered but wrong. Across darker, teeming continents, the white man was unshouldering his burden, leaving the natives to run riot while the pot-smokers and hippy-trippers waved carnations in the air, calling it revolution. Even Mr Tuttle's apoplectic perplexity could be understood, if the talk down Top Pub that arvo could be believed, much less understood. Nothing fitted together any more, nor did it seem to quite add up. If the wise heads down Top Pub couldn't figure it out, what chance did the rest of us have? And if even the Government couldn't be relied upon to endure, what hope for everything else? As I'd soon discover, not much. It seemed history made itself while we waited for the future to happen.

Case History No. 10: Congenital Familial Prosopagnosia

ONCE THERE WAS A FAMILY (MY FATHER BEGAN, CONSIDERING HIS REFLECTION in his tumbler) who could not for the life of them recognise another human face, even their own. As you know, I'm somewhat lax with names (Bloody terrible, I swear I heard my brother mutter), but I never forget faces (my father said, not noticing my brother's, screwed up with scorn).

The first inkling I had that something might be wrong was when the mother and daughter presented with colds. After prescribing some antibiotics, I asked them to return in a week or so. When they returned, the mother asked to see the doctor.

—I *am* the doctor, I replied.

They both looked at me as though my face was written in Chinese. Glancing at each other, they said nothing, though they were quiet people anyway.

They didn't know a soul, having moved here when the father was appointed night manager at the abattoir: they had no friends nor family in the whole District.

(like us, I realised, though I didn't say anything)

Word was that while the father was an efficient and conscientious manager, he wasn't exactly popular: didn't quite have the common touch, as some might say I have (he added, despite my brother's sub-audible groans). Word was he — like the rest of the family, which included an older boy — had 'a streak of the snoot,' as they say. Kinder observers might have suggested they were naturally reserved: they pretty much kept to themselves.

Neither child made any friends at the Big School. There were reports that they'd wander into the wrong classroom, terribly confused; the boy was dropped from the football team when he'd thrown the ball to the Nungah five-eighth. When the mother went shopping in town, she'd look at all the other ladies with a blank gaze, as though she'd never seen them in her life. Matey would bail her up with a joke or some gossip and she'd regard him like she was looking through him. Needless to say, people got offended and returned the snub. This town's always been a very close community — some might say too close, what with all the little cliques and tangled clans — it wasn't until you'd started Little School that they stopped calling us 'blow-ins.'

Having said that (my father continued, laughing a little at the memory), it's also a welcoming place, once it's decided you're true blue. But for the Snooties, as the family came to be known, cold whispers and silence flitted before them, like leaves fleeing a hurly-whirly.

You'd think they'd have left long ago after getting served such a thick wedge of the cold shoulder, but they stuck it out: the father heading into work every night, coming home with dripping-red plastic bags of meat, leaving a glistening trail by the side of the Borrigal road to be pecked at by the crows; the mother heading into the Shops — though Matey never put extra into her basket after one snub too many; the children sitting together at the front of the bus, the backs of their heads pelleted with spit-balls and taunts. It wasn't so much that they were obstinate as oblivious: when they did occasionally come into town, they wouldn't recognise the people they'd ignored the week before, and they'd behave as if nothing had happened, as if they were meeting everybody for the first time. Word got round they were completely loopy: a few roos loose in the top paddock, as Mr Tuttle might say.

It's one thing to suggest people might have extremely deficient social skills and another to accuse them of eccentricity — let alone madness — except for something that happened during the consultation. The daughter asked to go to the toilet. I directed her there and continued chatting to the mother. When the daughter returned, I remarked Well, here she is, to which the mother said Who?

— Why, your daughter, I replied, astonished. I pointed to the daughter, wiping her hands absently on her skirt.

— Oh, yes, my daughter, she answered sheepishly. She looked at her daughter for some time, as though she were studying the features of someone from a faraway country. My daughter, she repeated. Yes.

I turned to the daughter, expecting her to be as astonished as I was, but was met with the same impassive stare. Your mother? I suggested, and the girl nodded, although it seemed more notional than filial.

Prognostically, obviously, something was up, but prognostically, it's more likely someone might be 'loopy' — as they say — than they might be congenitally prospagnostic. Face-blindness is a rare condition, usually caused by cranial trauma, so

the prospect of finding an entire family blind to each other's and everybody else's faces was a tantalising one, staring me, well, right in the face (more sibling groaning)!

I reminded myself to check the literature later to determine if there was any precedent. Otherwise there was nothing wrong with either patient, although I advised them I'd drop round sometime during the week after rounds.

When I got to their house, the father, on a rare night off, was home, and they'd just finished their tea (mixed grill again, and I made a note to check their cholesterol at the next consultation). Still, apart from some lingering post-nasal drip, they seemed healthy enough. I noticed the television wasn't on — which, given how many families seem to eat in front of the idiot box around here — was a bit unusual.

(Though, of course, our father made a point of us eating at the dinner table as a family — or *en famille*, as he liked to call it — it wasn't unusual: it was the naturally civilised thing to do. As noted above, my father was a man with his own napkin ring. No talking with your mouth full. Elbows off the table — unless you're eating chicken or asparagus. How many times have I told you? Do not lick the knife! I never ever have, I'm proud to say)

What I noticed (he continued) was how distant the family seemed from each other, as though they'd found themselves in a room full of strangers. They'd look at each other as they did townsfolk at the Shops, occasionally asking each other who they were, then from time to time slapping their heads in recognition and tittering self-consciously. A couple of times, when the husband excused himself to the toilet or the wife went to the kitchen to get me a cup of tea, they'd ask on their return who I was. I'd never seen anything like it: it was the clearest, severest — and, well, first — case of congenital prosopagnosia I'd ever seen.

Obviously, I had to keep an element of professional reserve: I was here to help them. But my head couldn't help thrumming with questions. As you've no doubt observed — if you've been listening (he said pointedly in my brother's direction) — many patients deny their affliction: it's usually just the hypochondriacs and hysterics who persistently hold them up for re-examination. The lame will refute their limp; the myopic will dispute their blindness; the deaf will pretend they just weren't paying attention (he said, not looking at my brother, acting deaf). Pathology creeps up on us and we become used to it, clinically and otherwise (something clattered on the kitchen floor). They seemed decent enough folk, but it would be no surprise if they

took umbrage at the suggestion they were prospagnotic (though, as you know, I don't like beating about the bush, the truth can sound harsh: I said 'face-blind').

They actually took it very well. They didn't miss their hometown. Strangers in a strange land, doc, said the father. It must have been a terrible kind of loneliness, to feel like a émigré in your own home, though they didn't whinge about it.

They all read a bit and listened to the radio but found the television perplexing: if there were more than three blonde women in any programme — as it seems there always are on television nowadays — they spent the rest of the evening hopelessly lost in the plot, asking who was who. Then asking each other who they were too.

What did they see? They couldn't say — any more than I could tell you whether we were looking at black, or utterly different colours, and had merely agreed on a common term. It's said dyslexics cannot see the swirl and swish of letters, and perhaps this is what the Snooties 'saw:' a meaningless melange of features that made no sense at all. As if you or I tried to distinguish the faces of bees or sheep: totally unable to find an individual's face in a hive or herd (and no, it's *not* the same as thinking all Chinamen look the same).

That was why he took the night-shift — there was only a skeleton staff, and everybody wore name badges on their work clothes. Both he and his wife relied on other clues to tell who people were: their perfume, the way they held a teacup, the sound of their laughter, name badges. If someone had a sore throat or got a haircut, they were completely lost in a sea of indecipherable faces.

Although they were cagey about the details, the real, underlying reason they'd left their last town involved the daughter and a pair of fraternal twins. I didn't delve any further: I could see from their faces it was something they'd wanted to leave far behind them.

But I had to ask: How do you get to know someone you can never recognise? If you can never recognise them, how would you ever remember them, let alone love them?

— Luckily, beauty isn't skin deep, eh, Doc? the father said, smiling at his wife uncertainly. And he was right, of course. I've always remembered people's faces, and, beneath their skin, their case histories, and the same goes for beauty, beholder's eye or not.

But what to do with the Snooties? We couldn't have the entire town getting about in name badges, despite word soon getting out — although I didn't spread it myself: as you know, I'd never broach my Hippocratic ethics. As I say, this town is a welcoming one, once it's decided you're dinkum, and people made a point of declaring their names when they encountered them. Although some wags down the abattoir swapped name badges for a lark one night, the father was a good enough sport and took it in his stride. Matey did slip a few extras into the mother's basket after that — he's a nice bloke, after all. They stayed on until the kids finished school, when, like most young people here (he glanced at my brother gazing off into the distance), they moved to the Smoke, where every face was a strange one anyway.

Apparently the father and mother ended up as part-time lighthouse keepers on an island in middle of the Bass Strait, surrounded by ocean and rocks and penguins. But it struck me as ironic (although as noted above, my father was professionally disinclined to irony) that even so far away from any other human face, they'd always wake up next to a stranger (he said, suddenly aware of the cold, as the oven ticked its warmth away from the now empty kitchen).

10.

ONCE, WHEN THE WIND HAD CHANGED AND SCATTERED A QUIVER OF COLD across the sky, we thought we caught sight of something flashing in the woods. We were sitting on top of the Castle, not speaking, just lazing in each other's company, listening to the whisper murmuring trees, the drowsy flies bobbing around us as we chewed on grass stems and Jess dozed at the Castle gates. Suddenly, she sprang up, her growl tremulous and frightened, as the trees started to shiver and become restless, a mob of startled cattle.

We looked around, everywhere, trying to see what had upset her. She was a good, patient dog who'd long since been retired, and I was as troubled by hearing her growl — I couldn't remember the last time I'd heard it — as I was by whatever she was rearing at, her lips trembling and her back high, as she crouched at the end of the clearing.

—What is it, Jess? What's wrong, girl? Who's there? asked Charlie, her voice small. We jumped. Was it the breeze? — Who's there?

I tried to be brave, I really did. Charlie and me looked at each other, did the secret Indian hunting sign: two fingers waved over the mouth, then pointed in the direction we were going. I didn't want to split up: I didn't want to be apart from Charlie, I didn't want to be alone, I didn't want to go into the bush, I didn't want to see what was in there. The trees didn't look frightened any more: they looked frightening, as though they were about to stampede.

—Let's go home, I whispered. It's nothing. Probably just an emu. A wallaby. Nothing.

Charlie looked at me, and suddenly I felt like a child, a baby, even though she didn't have to say it. She was the brave one, she was the one who would change, and I knew if I didn't, I'd always stay a baby. I wanted to cry — not just because of whatever might be out there, but because of what was happening now.

—Gawarn, she said. How ace would an emu be? Whatcher think it is? The Panther? Imagine if we saw the Panther!...

She'd already jumped off the Castle and was creeping to the bush, its eyes shadowed, cradling the gloom. I wanted to cry out No, don't Charlie, don't leave me here! but my mouth was dry and the words stuck to my teeth like troublesome shards of corn. She kept creeping forward, holding a rotten branch we'd kept in our arsenal in case of Indian, Martian or Nazi attacks, but it had seemed so much bigger then, when the enemy wasn't so... real. Jess kept inching forward, gutting the dirt, her tail thrashing frantically.

I was stuck: stuck between running away and running to Charlie, crying and fighting. What did Mr Bulpitt call it in Natural Science? Fight or flight. I wanted to flee, a warm bloom of fear already flooding my shorts, and I was afraid that I mightn't — wouldn't, couldn't — save Charlie if the Panther — whatever it was — got her.

A branch snapped behind me, on the other side of the clearing. I wheeled around, trying to squint through the tangled knots of bush and rotting vegetation that clotted the forest floor. A flicker of something dark running through the ghost gums, aware it had been seen. A flurry away, into the shrouded noise of the bush. I cried out.

— What? said Charlie. Did you see it? What was it? What was it?

Jess careened back, chasing the shadow, toppling Charlie as she raced into the bush. — Jess! I cried out, but her breath was ragged, running out of sight. Charlie followed her, but stamped back not far from the edge of the clearing, shaking ants off her moleskins. I could still see her, swatting lantana and tall grass away with the rotten stick.

— I don't know, I said finally. I couldn't see it properly.

— Was it... you know? The P —

— I don't know. It was too quick. It might've been an emu, it stood up on two legs, I think. It was dark, but.

— Black?

I nodded.

— Dja think it might've be a mutant panther? A wotchermicallit, a were-panther?

Before I could consider it, Jess came bounding back, her tongue lolling with excitement.

—Nah, I said. Just a wallaby, I'm sure of it. I imagined my father laughing at the suggestion of the supernatural. If it can't be explained scientifically, he said, it doesn't exist.

We debated what it might be and whether it was the Panther or not. If it were, and we could see it, Charlie said, imagine the reward we'd get if we caught it! But we could get eaten, I pointed out. Not with our arsenal and Jess, she said.

How big was it? I couldn't say, but it didn't seem that big. Well, there you go, she said, we can plan an expedition and observe it from afar, just like Harry Butler does when he goes to the Northern Territory. We don't have to catch or anything like he does, we'll just watch it and take notes and talk in whispers and when we find out where its lair is, we can go into town and claim the reward. It'll be... *scientific*.

Was there a reward? Sure. Why wouldn't there be? I heard Cec telling Dad we lost nearly thirty lambs and three head of cattle so far, and it had to come to a head sooner or later.

But what if it wasn't a panther, but, say, a feral pig? Remember what happened to Michael Willett over at Wimboola? Went pig-shooting and him, his brother and three good pig-dogs were all attacked by that big black boar that lives in the scrub between there and Gidgerree. They're fierce, wild pigs, big as horses, I've heard, they'll eat anything. They were stuck up a coolabah for four days, weeing on the pig, watching it gobble their poo as it dropped from the branches.

—Whatcha saying? You afraid? I shrugged, looked at the ground.

—I didn't say that. I just think — you know, he had a gun, and we've only got a stick —

—I can get a gun. We can use the Castle as base camp, and we can keep our provisions in a food safe hung from the big gum. Just think of it, she said. Our last big adventure!

NOT LONG AFTER, ONE DESULTORY AFTERNOON, CHARLIE OFF BUSY somewhere else, lingering by the lake edge, I couldn't see the lonely black swan. Had it finally flown home, or gone somewhere else more exotic? I felt terribly sad: although my father would admonish me for auguring any significant omen in its absence, I couldn't help

but think of Charlie, and how she'd soon be leaving me, if she hadn't already. She was here, but not here, and just as somebody else was packing tins for our last big adventure without our mother noticing the gaps in the pantry, somebody else was nicking the old .22 from the work shed without Cec noticing it missing. I don't know why the swan's departure made me so sad; but, sniffing past the Boat Shed on the way home, I tried to be glad for it, free, soaring, coasting on whatever sirocco that had carried it home, wherever that was.

—Dead, said Kenny. Dead as a — dead as a — dead as a dodo!

Just like that. And he laughed, as though it were the funniest joke in the world (not being blessed with brains, with a few roos loose in the top paddock, thick as a plank, and all that, it was probably the funniest he'd ever get). Was he coming the raw prawn?

—Shut yer cakehole, ya drongo! growled Wally, seeing how dumbfounded I was. Kenny ambled off, a stupid look on his face.

—Don't mind 'im, he said, the black look on his face momentarily softening as he sat me down on the Long Jetty. Bloody dingbat.

Was it a shark? The Panther? Wally shook his head sadly.

—No, love, it weren't. Probably a dog, or wanna them — he cocked his head in the direction of the Spit — bloody mongrel bastards, he muttered darkly.

I didn't know if he was talking about the dogs or the boongs. I didn't know what to think. I didn't know anything.

—And if it weren't wanna them, said Wally, as comfortingly as he could, his voice thick with brine and splinters, it woulda been old age anyway. She were an old bird, he said gravely, looking out at the spume fluttering away, and she done beaut to get this far. If she'd nested on the Spit, not by the Jetty, she'da been awlright... but the other birds couldn't stand 'er in their territory. And she couldn't keep away from them tyres. That's how they got 'er.

Could I see her? Just one last time?

—Aww, luv, he said sadly. Ya don't wanna. Jez remember 'er the way ya last saw 'er: free and beautiful and all that.

He got up and returned to his nets, frayed with knots and full of holes.

— A dog or even a panther you can understand... but some *people!* Bloody animals. He shook his head in disgust. Man's inhumanity ta... his voice trailed off as unpicked the stitches.

I sat on the Long Jetty for I don't know how long, thinking for some reason of the mockingbird that would be killed in the book, which I'd put aside in the excitement — and terror — of hunting the Panther. I sat, and I thought, and I looked out to the eddying sky, hoping I'd see that proud, untiring, jagging shadow glide back into my field of vision. I couldn't even tell which tyre it had loved more than love itself: they all looked as jaded and perished as the others. I tried my best to remember it as I'd last seen it, rather than imagining it dismembered by the rotting shore, the crows picking at its eyes, the ants ravenously desecrating its secret places, Kenny casually tossing it into the burley bin. But I can't honestly remember what I thought or imagined.

Before I knew it, Kenny had rung five bells, and I was late for dinner — if our mother had gotten round to it. The world rushed in with a flurry of gulls as Wally tipped the burley bucket into the frothing water.

In the distance, a dog, one of those dun, scabby pariahs that fought for scraps at the back of the creek, yowled mournfully. And as he ambled in for his own repast, dredged up from the deep-fryer, Kenny absently whistled *Swanee*.

AND, LIKE THE SWAN, THE PRIME MINISTER WAS GONE AGAIN, SWEEPED OUT IN the double dissolution election he'd held on Saturday the 13th the month after his dismissal. Just about the unluckiest day of the year, I overheard our mother saying listlessly to Aunty Flo as they handed out limp leaflets outside Little School. Not that my father would have said as much, but even he knew how unlucky the thirteenth of anything was. Despite exhorting everybody to 'maintain the rage' it seemed nobody who said they'd do the right thing and vote for him actually did.

As *The Reader's Digest Book of Strange Stories, Amazing Facts* would have called 'the overpowering sense of dread that had overtaken me,' the morbid fear of that number was known, scientifically, as triskadekaphobia. Whatever it was, it —

along with the rasping heat and possibly the after-effects of the glittery magic texta — had made my skin rebel in painful eczema. How I wished I had different skin!

It all seemed so unfair! But then, as my father — and the new Prime Minister — was fond of saying, *Life Wasn't Meant To Be Easy*.

NOW, INSTEAD OF A FEW BIG STICKS, WE WERE GOING TO HAVE A REAL GUN. MR Fulbright used to let us shoot with an old .22 sometimes, as long as Cec was around. We'd try to hunt rabbits but soon got bored as they never came out until after dark, when you'd see their eyes shimmering, green stars in the spotlight.

So Cec would set up cans on a fence due for repair, and we'd try to shoot them off. Neither of us was very good, and the recoil would often send us spinning, with Cec warning us not to point it at him, then taking the gun and locking it in the shed, along with the other guns. Only Cec and Mr Fulbright had a key to the gun locker, and we had to ask Mr Fulbright for permission before asking Cec to watch us shoot.

Part of me was excited about the guns. They looked like oily sharks, cruel and oblivious, heavy and unwieldy. I always felt incredibly powerful, holding the .22 against my shoulder, squinting as I tried to line the sight up with the can. I'd bounce it in my hands, breathing in the linseed and gunpowder, but my arm would always ache and tingle after I'd shot a couple of rounds.

When Charlie and me played *Comanche Attack*, we'd used non-recoiling, self-loading sticks which always shot their target. But the .22 had a jammy catch — that was why we were allowed to use it. Useless for anything else, said Cec. Which made me wonder: what about the Panther?

Part of me was a little afraid of the guns, too. I was always scared of hitting something. I remember once trying to shoot the can and hitting a wallaby that had stood frozen at the sound. We all rushed over: my stray bullet had hit it in the gut, spilling its insides out, gritting them with dust.

Ants were gathering, and it was breathing shallow and hoarse. You could almost hear the life sucking out. Little bubbles of blood started foaming where the bullet had entered, and we both started to cry. Cec ran over behind us, a shovel in his hand. He pushed us out of the way and looked at the wallaby, its eyes wide but dull. It was still breathing, and I wondered if my father, had he been there, might've been able to save

it. I wished he was. I couldn't look at the dying wallaby, the blood starting to scab on its soft fur, but I couldn't *not* look.

—Go home, said Cec, in a tired voice. Liddle bugger's gone now.

Then he raised the head of the shovel and brought it down with ferocious speed, crushing its head with a fragile crack, until the insides ran out in spongy spurts. There were lumps of something hot and pink, like scrambled eggs, stuck to the bottom of the shovel; there were spatters of blood on his moleskins. We moved slowly away, as though we hadn't really seen what had happened.

—Remember what happened to Lot's wife? said Cec. Don't turn around — just go back to the house, I'll look after this.

Don't turn around, don't turn around, I kept thinking, as my lip congealed with gunk. Charlie ran on ahead, calling out to her mother, slamming the fly screen on the kitchen door behind her. I couldn't help it: I turned to look, and saw Cec put his foot on the head of the shovel, pressing it firmly down.

At first I thought he was digging the poor wallaby a grave; then I saw him pick up the head where the shovel had severed it, and throw it to Jess, who had a mad, slavering look as she jumped about, snatching at the dripping mess.

After that, I didn't like shooting at all. I remember one time Angus Day being over for some reason and shooting every can off the fence with his acute eye, only moving slightly with each shot.

—Nice work, matey, Cec said with a whistle, as Charlie looked on with an indescribable expression. You could be a real roofer one day.

WE HOOLED IT TO THE HAND CAVE WITH THE OLD .22 AND ALL THE TUCKER WE could carry in our bags.

And a poem I'd written for the occasion, streaked with tears and smudged with my burning cheeks, secreted into my swag.

How easy poetry flows from the pen when it's addressed to nobody in particular! I wonder, though, who I *did* write any of my poems for: I'd never have expected my

parents to read them, and if they did, they never said anything. Perhaps, looking back now, re-tracing old lines in yellowing clippings, I wonder if I wrote them for Charlie? Or even for myself? I can't say: I couldn't help writing them, but I can't say that the thrill of seeing my words in print were any emollient for the fear I'd be exposed as a closet poet. Still, every copy was kept, creased and crinkled as shed cicada skin, now brittle with forgetfulness. It's strange to feel the same swelling embarrassment I must have felt growing up, seeing that awful doggerel, saying nothing despite rhyming. Or more probably, because of it.

I'd never have dreamt of publishing that painful, private poem, which I dug with a glittery magic texta from somewhere deep and loamy within me — even if the refrain of her name would have given it away anyway — and even now, thinking of it, the clumsy way I think I tried to rhyme Charlie (ending up with a reference to barley, I think, though I'm sure I meant barely, which is hardly a rhyme) and how the words, so awkwardly stuck together, seemed too paltry to mean anything at all.

(It's said that the most difficult words to rhyme are 'purple' and 'orange,' although 'black' has 232 possible rhymes, 'white' 255. And 'grey' 755. But the name of your beloved... perhaps no words are enough).

Even now, thinking of it after so long, as though I'd just found at the bottom of a long-forgotten box, hidden in a dusty corner at the back of a drop-sheeted room, closed for years, the dust and musty air wheezing out in an agitated flurry, motes of lost time flecking the dim light, the shame and sadness fluttering out like bewildered moths, beating their addled wings against the dirty window of my heart, I still feel like all those words that didn't quite rhyme with her name: awkward, ill-fitting, chary... But I doubt I'd have found the right words even if her name was Sue (602 possible rhymes, including Peru, kangaroo, who knew, blue, us two, I do, I love you, I do, it's true, I do...), all those muddled rhymes and assonances wishing we could be somewhere else, somewhere we'd never visited, where we could be somebody else — her always her, but not the her she'd become, and me anybody but me.

I don't know how I wrote that terrible poem, which, even if I could remember it — and I've spent a long time trying to forget — I wouldn't repeat now. I must have spent most of the night on it, and I must have fallen asleep as I did, because when I woke up, my cheeks were scratched with paper cuts and to my horror — and my brother's unbearable amusement, his cruel laughter cracking his own ruptured face —

I discovered the poem, all those *Charlies* and *barelys* and *hardlys* and *love love loves*, scribbled all over my face. Backwards. I could read it in the mirror, repeating my hopelessness and talentlessness back to me, no matter how hard I scrubbed.

Like all magic, that glittery text hid an insidious harm: I felt like the assistant sawn up by a clumsy magician, my insides revealed to a cruel audience, the parts rearranged without care or design. The harder I rubbed, the more the words seemed to reposition themselves, becoming darker and darker, until you couldn't see my face for bad poetry. I was more than a touch shady, as my father might say.

And so, once he'd stopped stifling his laughter too, he allowed me my only day off school ever until my face cleared up. The very last day, as it turned out. It wasn't going to be a free day, though: our mother set me to work tidying my room, then putting the laundry out, as a hot gust blew through the backyard, stiffening the sheets and tea towels as catsear hair fluttered over them, a squall of troubling feelings. At least I didn't have to watch him, bouncing up for yet another prize, or see her, beaming as he sat back down next to her.

After trying to avoid the bathroom mirror, the hallway mirror, the gleaming oven door, the glass back of the trophy cabinet in the living room, all of them shining my mortification back at me, I couldn't stand it any longer. I washed and washed until it felt as if I'd stripped my face away; then when there was nothing left to scrub, I washed again, pink spots of mortification drizzling the shower floor.

THE PATH TO THE HAND CAVE WAS FULL OF DEAD ENDS, WRONG TURNS, TRAILS leading nowhere, a track becoming a fire trail in the space of a few odd foot, inexplicably continuing as its old self again around the corner, muttering into dirty spoor, whispering into the elusive, eerie shadows between the trees. They said that Captain Twilight, the bushranger, had hidden there from the troopers when he'd escaped from Cockatoo Island, though nobody knew what had happened to him after that; he'd disappeared by the time The Major had claimed the land and cleared the town. They said he'd murdered the first settler in the District, a Scottish hermit called Potter, whose ghost was said to haunt the corner off the Gidgeree track where Boyd Moran's erstwhile mate had come off. If you ever saw someone thumbing a ride in

the dark there, you just kept driving: there were stories of drivers who'd disappeared after picking up Potter's vengeful ghost. Who knows how many lives the Borriral Bypass saved?

The air was hot, hotter than any day we could ever remember, sizzling and hissing, smoking and champing with foreboding and threat. The sweat dripped from us only to sputter on the ground, which slurped it with cracked lips, its dry, withering thirst unslaked. Though I didn't tell Charlie, I'd already drunk my water. We didn't talk much through our exertions anyway, Charlie looking for clues, me swelling and sloshing with frothy dread.

Yet the travails to get there were as much a point as finally getting there, straining against the hill and the rocks as we pushed through the thorny, brooding scrub. Jess, caught up in the adventure, scampered ahead and careened back as fast as her wobbly old legs could carry her, her shaggy coat thick with thorns and bindies.

We passed the great splintered stump of a once mighty tree. Was that all that was left of Woody's once great tree, Colossus, the grass still yellow and crushed where the trunk had once fallen? Everywhere, all around us, the brittle skeletons of tree limbs and moulted snake skins, the sickly-sweet stench of dead birds and forgotten possums: all the crowded humus and detritus of the eternal living, killing bush, where explorers and children and dreams were lost forever, nothing behind us to mark our passing.

We were only going by hunches. Perhaps if we'd had one of the Jindy Mob with us to help us follow the tracks, we might have had a better idea of where we were headed. But though Jess snuffled with her dripping nose and Charlie might stop from time to time, the .22 slung round her shoulder, her hand a visor against the relentless sun, looking far into some unseeable, unsayable distance, we were walking into the unknown, farther and farther than we'd ever wandered before, into uncharted territory, where panthers be. After the Hand Cave, who knew where what we'd find? Every track was a path less travelled, if traversed at all since the Dreamtime.

Out of nowhere, a crack, which made me drop the poetry swag.

—Aww, Boo, ya nonce! laughed Charlie. Ya such a scaredy-cat, ya chook!

What was it but? Wouldn't have been the Panther, she said. They liketa... *pounce!* We laughed and wrestled in the blenching shade before stopping, gasping and

cracking out a Pollywaffle roadie, melted from her swag, oozing our hands sticky and chocolate, Jess raspily lapping our fingers. I thought I'd burst with happiness, and I promised myself to remember this moment, just as I promised myself to savour my (smaller) half; but before I knew it, I'd gobbled it all down and the moment had passed and in the still, parched heat, I felt sick.

Before I could say anything, she put her finger to her lips Indian-style, and we kept stalking the Panther.

In the Hand Cave, ancient, anonymous hands pressed against the glowering walls. Once, the abos had come here, after corroborating under the once wide, expansive boughs of the Colossus, and made their marks, spraying ochre and clay against their outstretched arms, the silhouettes iridescent among the throb of the fireflies, their fickle light as distant and feeble as stars. For a moment, you could imagine those ancient Dreamtime spirits real, alive, whispering in the echoey darkness. The cave dripped, dripped, dripped, the darkness.

In that close, womby damp, under the cover of darkness, I kissed Charlie. Or rather, tried. As I misjudged in the shadows where her lips were, even though I could feel the downy, egg-breathed warmth of her face, and I knocked us both into a muddy puddle.

I could see her teeth bared in the uncertain half-light.

—Whatcher do that fer, ya nong? she cried.

—I — I —

—What?

—I love you, Charlie. I love you Charlie. I love you Charlie. I love... it echoed about the cave, filling me with even more mortification.

—That's disgustin'! she cried as she got up, and the mortification frothed into something hard and scabby, as I lay in the mire.

—B-but —

—But what? I like Gus, she said matter-of-factly. Gus Gus Gus Gu Gu...

It made me wince. Gus. I tried to protest that I — I liked him too.

—I *really* like him, but! Like *like* him, she said. Like like like li.. We pashed — pashed pashed pashed pa...

I felt sick, really sick. — But I love *you*, Charlie. Charlie Charlie Charlie Char...

—Geeze, Boo, fair dinkum. I never picktcha fer a perve! Perve perve per... Why cantcha be happy fer me? Why cantcha ever be happy? Happy happy happy haaa...

Like my parents, she only called me by my name when she was angry with me, and I could tell by her quiet voice she wasn't merely annoyed. I lay there foolish and seeping and she did nothing to help me up. What could I say? How could I be happy when I was in love?

Even I could tell in the dismal murk she wasn't even looking at me. And then, at the sound of a voice calling at the entrance, she strode out. I lay there for a while, covered in muck and bat poo, then picked myself up, walking out into the too-bright, blinking-bright sunlight, unable to look back. And when I reached daylight, I saw them, laughing as if over some private joke, a joke I knew had to be at my expense, again.

—Hooroo, said Angus Day, as cheerfully and innocently and smugly as ever, bolting and unbolting the gun. — Sorry I'm late, I was helping Mum. Whatcher find? Charlie laughed darkly. I pushed past them, blinded by tears and humiliation, crashing into the rocky bush, the trees pressing and clutching at me like maddened hordes of angry enemies, their ears bent down with ridicule, whispering behind closed hands and running grass, the hot ground furiously leaping up to swallow me in countless black empty maws, tongues of fire raging and shrieking with unpronounceable, unutterable, unimaginable, unforgettable fury, before everything went blank and bone-white, like a maniac's thought.

Case History No. 11: Acute Conjunctive Retiniasis

ONCE THERE WAS A BOY (MY FATHER BEGAN, LOOKING BUT NOT LOOKING INTO the darkness past the barbecue) who saw too well. You mightn't think this much of a problem (he said, seeing our doubting faces) but in the human body, as in life, too much of anything is never a good thing.

He was born myopic: couldn't even see the fingers in front of his face. Mr Ballantyne the optometrist prescribed him a pair of terribly thick lenses — the kind people call 'coke-bottle glasses' — which were affixed to his head with rubber bands.

For a while, he was astigmatic. But with Mr Ballantyne's assiduous adjustments, the other eye was eventually corrected, and for a brief period before the onset of puberty, he could see perfectly.

However, between your ages, the correction over-corrected itself, and he became hopelessly long-sighted: he couldn't even see the fingers in front of his face. Again, Mr Thompson prescribed corrective lenses, similarly thick. The rest of his face seemed to disappear into the dinner plates of his eyes. Even for me, it was disconcerting to talk to him when his mother brought him in for a check-up: he looked as if he were gazing through you.

The year he became excessively long-sighted he won all three pennants in Shooting (Small-bore and Sling), including the Open trials. I remember his mother mentioning he'd stopped reading — partly because his range of vision stretch out so far Mr Ballantyne was forever grinding new lenses to keep up; and mainly because everybody from Wimboola to Gidgerree wanted him rooing or rabbiting or pigging.

Still, no matter how well he shot, it was no substitute for a proper education, but then reading's never been one of this District's favourite pursuits, has it?

(Presumably our mother was in her room, reading again, if the muffled sounds of Helen Reddy were any indication. My father would pause at this point and remove his own heavy-framed glasses to press the shiny dents in the bridge of his nose.

My father was a man of great foresight: a real visionary. He always exhorted us to Keep Your Focus! Keep Your Focus! and Keep your Eyes on the Big Picture! though I was never quite sure what that meant, exactly, I never lost sight of his wisdom —

and I most certainly never let him get blurry, unlike my brother, who'd squint with increasing boredom.

Of course, despite his concerns about our focus and our futures, the demands of his profession meant that it was our mother who was always the parent at Parent-Teacher night. It was our mother who helped with homework and signed it before bed; it was our mother who made and cut and wrapped our lunches; and it was she who cleaned up after dinner and put us to bed.

But although he didn't have the time to be so intimately involved in the day-to-day of our schooling, my father always emphasised the importance of education. He was always reiterating the need for us to study hard, do well at school, and possibly go on to university. Nice little practice, he'd say sometimes in a reflective mood, even though he thought my brother's singing ambitions frivolous and delusional. Something to fall back on.

Although he was a generous man, he reminded us of the sacrifices he and our mother had made to prepare and provide for our possible university education, and he Expected some return on the investment. Although he didn't have the time to read those long, romantic Russian novels our mother loved, his own study was lined with medical and scientific tomes and journals.

Although some people, such as Snowy Taylor, for example — and what an example he was, my father would pointedly remind my brother — might suggest reading was a frivolous pursuit, my father would remind us: Look where it got me... and more darkly, look where it won't get him.

Of course, my brother by now couldn't help himself, and it would lead to yet another quiet little chat. Whichever way you looked at it, the story of the boy who saw too much wasn't one of my brother's favourites, though my father would tell it from time to time, often at end of term, and especially after going through the report cards.

But it was one of my favourites, and it inspired me read. Now... well, I'm not so sure. But that's hardly my father's fault, of all people's)

What happened to the boy who saw too much? (I asked at this point, trying to call my father and my brother back from their quiet little chat, which was making dogs down the creek start to yowl)

Well, (my father continued) he could see through everything. By thirteen, as his voice broke, he acquired a hitherto unseen form of vision — at least in the real world: he became x-ray sighted.

(I knew there was a scientific basis for this, having seen advertisements for x-ray specs at the back of my Archie comics, though I never could manage to scrape together 25 cents to send to Madison WI, wherever that was)

With all the rabbiting and rooing and pigging — he could shoot the ear off a fox in the pitch black with his eyes closed — he dropped out of school, and, too young to go down Doon Pub after work with the other jackaroos and farmhands, he'd started loitering about, up to no good, perverting on young women in various states of undress, reading the lips of arguing neighbours, watching *Rawhide* or *Bonanza* in the house down the street while his parents hunched round the wireless.

It all came to a head one day, when walking past the dunny, he caught sight of his nanna on the loo, her day dress pulled up over her — anyway, you get the picture.

(We did, we did! Yucko!)

He was seeing too much: when he went to bed at night, he could see past the sheets, past the pillow, the mattress, the springs, the bedframe, the carpet, the floorboards, the foundations, the plumbing, the wiring, the topsoil, the sandstone, the granite below that; past the layers and layers of archaeological artefacts and relics and bones and fossils, past the water table, past further layers of rock, past the artesian bore that runs under our town, far far below, through darkness and silence, to the fiery mantle that boils underneath, the roiling and raging inferno.

(our mother, having gotten herself a Bex and a glass of water, warned him not to frighten me so soon before bed, before her bedroom door shut again).

It became difficult for him to do anything, because he could see everything. Images became piled and piled upon each other, a confusing palimpsest, so that they began to lose their form and substance; thousands and thousands of staccato lines, edging against each other, so that it was impossible to even distinguish colours. In effect, the over-correction of his eyesight had immersed him in a hazy, buzzing, hallucinatory blur. He may as well have been blind.

The more he saw, reality became transparency, colour became diffused and confused, like a Persian carpet gone awry: as though each thread had come loose and

each filament of each thread had come loose, and each particle of filament had come loose... and so on, and so on.

Do you get the picture? Need a moment to imagine it?

Anyway (he continued, bringing us back from our confusing visions), he couldn't sleep, not seeing what he was seeing, seeing through his eyes. Mr Ballantyne confirmed it when we took him in for another consultation: he didn't just recite the test chart perfectly, he could say how many bricks there were in the wall behind the wall behind the wall. He knew how much change Mr Thompson had in his pocket. He could see through us both.

His parents were at their tethers' ends: he'd gone through over thirty pairs of spectacles, and they weren't well-off. Eye surgery was considered, but in those days it was horrendously expensive and dreadfully risky; although I'm more than happy to suggest surgical alternatives when therapeutic ones fail, in this case, it wasn't an option.

Nobody had seen the condition before: any ophthalmological procedure would have been an experimental one: there was no guarantee of success, let alone whether it mightn't make things worse. We did consider sending him to Sydney for further treatment, but in the meantime, so frustrated by his lack of sleep, he sat in his back yard on the banana lounge and just sat and sat and sat, staring into the sun. And he swore he thought he could see right into the sun, right through it, and thought he saw... well, although he seemed happier, he was obviously raving. Whatever he saw had by then been burnt into memory, and there was no way he'd be able to describe it adequately — his lack of reading had stunted his vocabulary. But he did say that when he saw it — whatever it was — he could feel the skin on his eyeballs being peeled away, clean as an apple peel (our eyes watering as we rubbed them, just to be sure) as if it were being scrubbed away, varnished with lightness.

I sometimes wonder (my father continued, turning to my brother, who seemed to be looking through us, too): what if that boy had put his talents to better use? Imagine the planets and constellations he might've discovered, for everyone's benefit. With all that nothingness to gaze upon, surely there must've been something to see?

But then again (he said, turning away from the stars and chuckling into his whisky), you should've seen his nan!

11.

I HAD NO IDEA WHERE I WAS OR HOW I'D GOTTEN THERE, WAKING IN THAT COLD white silence. Let alone who I was. A pale faced woman, her cheeks strained and stained with sadness and exhaustion, jumped up, her eyes full of tears. She kissed me and though I was overwhelmed by her affection, there was something deeply comforting in her desperate, enveloping embraces. She called me darling, her little booey darling.

The sad woman told me I was her daughter, Sarah (though everybody called me Boo), and that my brother and his mate, a young bloke called Norman (though everybody called him Snowy), had found me unconscious under a coolabah tree by the billabong. They'd been bushwalking when the fire had raced up the trail leading down from the Willetts'. A molten bough had fallen over me, burning me badly. Unable to wake me or move me in the frightening face of the fire, which roared down the hill at a blistering pace, devouring the droughty bush, all that dry tinder waste, the desiccated trees, stripped of their skins, shrieking with pain as the inferno sucked the air out of their lungs.

Apparently, my brother and his mate (Snowy was his name) trod water most of the night, the capricious swinging rope flinging popping sparks into the boiling billabong as they cradled me in the very hollow where the Yowie was said to dwell, the skin of the water like the rind left on soured milk — but black, like everything. The sky lowered with smoke as thick and foreboding as storm clouds, only filled with fire rather than rain. When the fire had died down enough, and they'd managed to lug me all the way to town, they discovered everything gone, as if it had never existed.

It was news to me: I'd been asleep since then, nearly six weeks. And nothing I'd remember — if I could remember anything at all — was true at all.

HOW SOME MEMORIES CAME BACK TO ME AND WHY OTHERS DIDN'T ISN'T something I could say, even if I could understand it. It was confusing to discriminate between what I'd dreamt, what I'd remembered, what was remembered for me, what I'd

feverishly imagined. And that without the only dreadful certainty that whatever I remembered wasn't real anyway. So although I can say now with a little more certainty that, like my father, I'm not given to deliberate mistruths, I still cannot be sure what was what then, when I didn't even know my own self.

Flashes returned, with some prompting here and there from the sad-faced woman who said she was my mother. Angry Siamese twins, ancient turtles, swirling voices, giant dwarves, walking trees, a hand cave flickering with the vacillating glow of fireflies, a shadowy panther, a lonely swan, a tow-headed girl. But what was real and what wasn't — including myself — I couldn't be sure. Still aren't, if I'm being honest.

THAT BEAUTIFUL, SAD-FACED WOMAN, WHOM I NOW REMEMBERED WAS MY MOTHER, IF only because I saw her every day, and because I had to believe she was who she told me she was, told me the rest of it as gently as she could to avoid (as she whispered outside the door) shocking *her* (me). But because I couldn't remember any of it, it didn't mean much to me anyway: rather, I looked at it as if trying to visualise a half-remembered dream, or a half-dreamt memory. It was as if she were telling me about someone else, someone I barely knew, much less could imagine. Part of me — though which part that was, I couldn't tell you even now — was greedy to know more. There's no more maddening question than *Who Am I?* and especially so when all the things that are supposed to make you seem to be someone else's, as if you're putting on clothes one size too small, in the wrong colour. They make you itchy and restive. And so another part of me, already having lost interest, sometimes had to fight the urge to change the subject or not to speak at all. But, knowing nothing and remembering little, I had nothing to say, so I listened as she talked (and did she like yacking, my mother!) until the afternoon sloped long rueful shadows into the ward, sliced to ribbons by the venetians, and the nurse called in to remind her visiting hours were over.

YOU CAN READ ALL ABOUT THE FIRE AND HOW MUCH IT DESTROYED AND THE devastation it inflicted on our town, as, because I have no memory of it and was unconscious for everything that followed, I couldn't tell you. But if you're looking for accuracy, I can't recommend *The Chronicle*.

Just as nobody could tell you if a tree felled in the hills made any sound if nobody was around to hear it, nobody could tell you how the fire started, or where. Oh, there were various theories put forward by various people, of varying credibility, and a lot of conjecture in *The Chronicle* but the formal investigations had so far led to nothing — after all, any evidence, like everything else, had gone up in a billow of black smoke.

According to that beautiful, sad-faced woman, my mother, the fire raged through town, rushing down as though the hills were bleeding. The sky became thick and swollen with ash and dust, lowering and heavy. Apparently, the entire town was burnt to clinkers, entirely wiped from the map, as if it had never existed. Even the Cenotaph, which had stood for so long, the Glorious Dead pinned to its chest like shining medals, had been reduced to nothing. The Shops were gone; the bus stop on the Borrigan Road, gone too; the abattoir had collapsed into itself, reeking of death and charred flesh. Little School, the old church hall, *everything* reduced to ashes. Not a single tree was spared, the charred remains scattered like unearthed skeletons. And only the blackened shell of Doon Pub remained (though it would have to be demolished, the landlords finally silenced, reduced to glowering embers in the cellar). What was left of the Long Jetty jabbed into the Stygian skin of the lake, an accusing coal-black finger pointing nowhere. There was not a house left, apart from ours, for some reason.

Those who didn't flee fought the flames back and there was no braver fighter than my father, who stood at the front of the line, his face black and the hairs on his arms burnt away. When they'd managed to push the flames back as far as they could with what help they could get from the Wimboola and Gidgeree brigades, (the Borrigan Bypass cut off by falling debris), my father set up a field hospital in the old churchyard, treating those he could, and comforting those he couldn't. He treated nearly half the town, all of them choking, covered in the same burning blackness: You couldn't tell the blacks from the whites, my mother told me he'd said.

Although they wouldn't say so now, and they didn't in the firestorm that followed, there were a lot of people who wouldn't be here today if it weren't for my father, who worked tirelessly and frantically for three feverish days, setting bones, applying dressings, suturing and stitching. Those that had survived the conflagration were evacuated when help could get through the blaze and the Bypass to Borrigal, where they took refuge in the Scout Hall. But there were even more dead: on the pockmarked corkboard at the entrance, there was a roll of charred names, smudged with ash and tears and desperation. Everybody had lost somebody, apart from our family, for some reason. I wouldn't have recognised any of the names on that devastating list and I couldn't recognise any of the voices that howled in agony and devastation outside the Base Hospital as they discovered the missing were dead; but that didn't make them any less blood-curdling, hair-raising, spine-tingling, bone-chilling. But I couldn't stop listening: the bandages stopped me from putting my now numb, nubby fingers in my ears.

THERE WASN'T MUCH TO DO IN THE WARD WHEN MY MOTHER WASN'T THERE. I couldn't move much for the bandages and burns, but trying to remember anything and work out who I was was tiring, so I often just lay there, looking at the bleachy ceiling. Looking at nothing, I'd see everything. Sometimes I'd imagine myself out of my body, looking down on myself, though there naturally weren't any mirrors in the Burns Ward, and wonder what I looked like. I hoped I looked like the beautiful sad faced woman, but when I asked her, she only wept into her hankie.

One afternoon, I happened to see the front page of the local rag, *The Chronicle*, left behind by a visitor or one of the night nurses.

TOGETHER FOREVER AND FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

read the headline. A young girl, about my age, had died in the fires with a school-mate, a nice looking boy, if the indistinct class photo was any indication. They'd been found curled together at the entrance of a popular District attraction, a cave filled with ochre hands and fireflies, though the force of the inferno had killed all the fireflies, leaving only those ancient, eternal hands in the ghostly shadows.

At the time, I remember feeling sad: what a tragic waste. I was grateful to be saved, even if I felt a faint stain of guilt for living. But I didn't know these kids, did I? And if I ever had, I couldn't remember.

When my mother came in and saw the page laid open on the bed like a patient etherised upon a table, as I drowsed, she burst into tears, sobbing like a landed fish gulping for air. I woke with a terrible, disorienting fright (that would soon become all too familiar): not knowing anyone else — even myself — with any certainty, she was my one link to everything I'd once known but could not remember.

— What's wrong?

She broke down. Charlie, she said. Poor little Charlie.

— What happened to him? I asked. Is he okay?

She hiccupped, a mucousy choking that left sappy streamers dripping from her clammy face. Oh, my darling, she cried, and held me close, almost smothering me in the smell of ash, and something else I couldn't quite place.

When she came back that afternoon, she showed me a picture of a tow-headed girl, my age, who'd apparently been in my class at Little School.

— Anything? she'd asked, holding the photograph as close and intently as her gaze. I apologetically shook my head. How I wanted to remember, even if only for her sake! But the harder I tried, the harder it was to catch the memory, like wisps of catsear hair flitting through me on a windy day. She fled the room again, returning, sniffing, her smile fixed as she pressed down the creases in her skirt and fed me chocolate Scotch Fingers, her hands lilted to sweep a lock of hair straggling her forehead as she searched the room for something I couldn't see, suddenly looking out the window, looking but not seeing. Even then I knew she wasn't looking at the garden or the other wing, but somewhere else, somewhere I'd never visited, where even if I had been there, I could remember nothing of it.

WHAT I FIRST REMEMBERED — BEFORE I REALLY REMEMBERED MY MOTHER, that beautiful, sad-faced woman; before I really remembered my brother, so kind and solicitous, sometimes smiling just as sadly; before I remembered that sandy-haired

girl I'd loved so deeply and so painfully for so long; before I remembered where I was and who I was, even if I was never able to remember how I got there, to the Base Hospital's burns unit — was him, my father.

My mother showed me a photo of a family, red and smiling, the father's arm awkwardly round his wife, who despite the quality of the photography, looked like the woman who now looked at me sadly and expectantly, though I had to squint like the family in the photo to make that out. You could barely see their faces, the shining darkness of the sea behind them making shadows of them all.

And then I remembered the old man who took the photo took it more or less in the direction of the sea, so it would show where we were; and as a result, the family — *us* — as I now started to remember, were overexposed, suffused with redness, like blood tinted by water; and then I remembered that even though I was afraid of the sea, what a happy day it was, when we were all of us together, our skin tender and sticky.

And then I remembered he was a big man, he had big hands. His arms, cabled with veins, were covered in thick black hair. His big hands were so powdery-soft, as I remembered. Rushing to him when he arrived home, I remembered imagining I'd be swallowed up by his big boa arms and deep brown rumble. How could I have ever forgotten?

AND THEN, JUST AS IT ALL CAME BACK TO ME, IN SUCH VIVID AND BREATH-TAKING detail that it was hard to know what I'd remembered and what I'd dreamt, what had been remembered for me and what I'd imagined to fill in the gaps of the puzzle of myself, it was all lost.

Somehow, without doing anything, without seeing anything, without saying anything, we weren't the Doc's family any more.

It turned out that in the course of celebrating my father's heroism after Black Wednesday, as *The Chronicle* had dubbed it, Jack Clackett had done a little nosing into my father's long and distinguished career before he'd settled in the District and established his practice and hard-earned reputation. It wasn't what he found, but what he *didn't*, that raised the alarm.

My father had never been one to toot his own horn, as they liked to say around town. Unlike Mr Goodrich the Solicitor, or Mr Horsley the Vet, my father didn't bother with displaying his many qualifications, nor advertising his rooms with a plaque. Everybody knew who he was; and besides, he was a clinician, not a book-keeper: he'd always cheerfully acknowledged his hopelessness with paperwork, and his ability and actions had always been more than enough, more than any scrap of paper.

Of course, nobody expected that after the Shops had burnt down anybody would have anything left, much less their paperwork. But when Clackett contacted the Australian Medical Association, which would have had records of my father's membership and qualifications, it did not. My father, astounded at Clackett's impertinence, did all he could not to belt him one, and remonstrated with him for his imputations, so soon after the calamity that had engulfed the town.

Chucking a hissy fit and consumed by vindictiveness, Clackett contacted a courts reporter contact at *The Mirror* in Sydney who apparently identified my father as the erstwhile colleague of a prominent Bellevue Hill obstetrician, and it was on this tenuous testimony, contaminated by motive and the passage of time, that Clackett built his case, if you could call it that.

The first headline, which, being in a coma, sleeping the deep sleep of forgetfulness, I thankfully didn't see, was as lurid as could be expected. Which Doctor? it screamed, with a story full of sensational epithets like 'Doctor Who,' 'The Mystery Man,' 'The Man Without a Past,' 'Anonymous (not to be confused with the celebrated author of the same name).' Aliases of all sorts — 'Ignatius Fatches,' 'Ishmael O'Malley,' 'Seamus Noone,' 'Tom Anshud' and others — were bandied about as 'proof' of the various identities my father was supposed to have assumed. But there was nobody who could verify any of these, let alone that they were ever used by my father.

(in fact, my father apparently suggested to the few people who would listen that it appeared if he wasn't afflicted by Munchausen Syndrome, Clackett might be suffering from Fregoli Syndrome, in which the sufferer paranoically believes that different people are in fact one person in disguise. If, as he suspected — obviously not having had the opportunity to examine Clackett — it had been caused by a brain lesion, then Clarry needed help. Right now! It's a measure of my father's character he

continued to think of others, even those like Clackett, and that apparently his only regret was that he couldn't treat him himself)

When there's trouble, people draw ranks, and so the District's people did. Even when the first ridiculous accusations were made, whoever was left of our town pulled together defiantly. *We look after our own*, said Old Earl gruffly, *even the blow-ins*, even though to the denizens of Borrigal, who'd always looked down on our town anyway, we were *all* blow-ins, elbowed out of the way at Jackson's General Stores or the Borrigal Arms.

Although they didn't say anything, he was still the Doc, as far as anybody was concerned, unless proven otherwise, which hadn't been as far as anybody was concerned. Yet.

But, encouraged by Clackett's vociferous sensationalism — every day, some new, unfounded allegation, 'according to anonymous sources' and 'on good authority by close friends' whose names were never revealed — all those unspoken suspicions and resentments formed themselves on paper, as if scribbled on notepads strung round necks, and it seemed that they became truer in the black-smudged pages of *The Chronicle* and other scandal-sheets, such as *The Mirror* and *The Sun*. Of course, nobody said anything — and after the fire, nobody would have dreamt of using the exact words — but as even my father used to say, it was assumed that Where's There's Smoke, There's Fire.

Every day, the front page was filled with all sorts of wild surmises and incredible libels: that my father was on the run from Sydney sly-groggers and abortionists; that he was having an affair with Sister Gloria Munday; that they'd been fiddling the books for years, purchasing non-existent equipment through a shady middleman and keeping the profits; and most ludicrous of all, that he'd been responsible for the Panther killings, practising his quackish surgical techniques on innocent livestock.

Of course, in the course of the police investigation, wrote Clackett, it would be inappropriate to make any allegations which could influence the natural course of justice, but it is interesting to note that livestock attacks ended with the Alleged Doctor's arrest.

Of course they had — half the District had been burnt away, leaving only the tender backs of the hills, stripped and raw, like the warped spine of an old dog, the

crusty remains of its skin stuck under your nails. And with all those trees and stock only ashes, there's no way a panther (Alleged or otherwise) would have had a place to hide, let alone survive — the fire raced through everything, a tide of flame. So it stood to reason that once the Panther — and most stock in the District — was destroyed in the fire, the attacks would have stopped. But of course, that didn't fit Clackett's theory, did it?

In a puff, exhaled as carelessly as one of my brother's casual smokes, my father's hard-earned reputation dissipated into the blanched, susurrating air: where he'd once enjoyed such a measure of reverence that he'd had his own bottle of Johnny Walker Black on Top Pub's top shelf, he was all too soon an object of derision and ridicule as abject as any boong down the Spit, pilloried in the tawdry pages of *The Chronicle* as savagely as he was down Borrigal's Top Pub, the Labour in Vain. Everybody choked on talk, the whispers flitting from place to place on the bush telegraph, while all the things left unsaid took root without anybody saying anything until they'd tangled everything like lantana, infesting hearts and knotting thoughts.

— Funny, innit, how *his* house didn't burn down? Not that I'm sayin' nuthin', somebody said.

— Or how nobody in *his* family died? muttered another.

It wouldn't have surprised me at all if Clarry Clackett hadn't published another 'scoop' accusing him of starting the fire as well, though thankfully, for my father's sake at least, he was carried away before that could happen. That didn't stop Clackett hypocritically calling my father's bailing as a miscarriage of justice without the surety of a confirmed identity.

The dissenting voices soon drowned out the few remaining loyal ones. If Clarry Clackett wasn't going to print any letters in defence of the extinct Jindyworobak, he was hardly going to bother doing running any that called for calm or gave my father the benefit of the doubt — let alone any that praised everything he'd done for the District, both before and during Black Wednesday. Somehow, without doing anything, without seeing anything, without saying anything, we weren't just not the Doc's family any more, we'd ended up even worse than the Jindy Mob.

My father had bestridden that District like a colossus. Now in the rush to cut him down, the very mob who'd once so respected him and clamoured for his healing

touch now fell over themselves to mock him. Even his nationality was being called into question, and it somehow got about that he was an illegal alien who'd stowed away on a smugglers' ship and snuck in through dubious means.

— Aussie man me arse! Mr Tuttle was apparently heard to slur down the Borrigal Arms, shouldered away again from the bar by the locals, forced to sit by the dunny, nobody paying him any attention at all.

AS THE HYSTERIA REACHED FEVER PITCH (OUR MOTHER REPORTED), MY FATHER was taken in for questioning. He continued to maintain his innocence, and his identity. He was even charged under the name he gave, belying the weakness of the Crown's case against him. With no further proof other than the unreliable, second-hand testimony offered by Clackett's hack contact and Clackett's own wild accusations, it couldn't be proven beyond reasonable doubt who he was, although admittedly, its case was only to prove beyond that spurious doubt what he *wasn't*.

The worst part was that there was no legal recourse to the salacious and libellous nonsense they contained: as long as my father refused to give any name other than the one the prosecution had determined with only the slenderest circumstantial evidence and without any other substantiation or corroboration was not really his, he didn't really have a name to protect from defamation. Or, boasted Clarry Clackett down the Labour in Vain, a bleedin' leg to stand on.

There were many things my father *wasn't*: he wasn't a wife-beater and murderer like Mr Briskett; he wasn't a wastrel and drunk like Gunna Moran; he wasn't a loudmouth and bully like Big Kel down Doon Pub; he wasn't a gossip and wower like Mr Tuttle; he wasn't a preening show-pony like 'Flash' Gordon Goodrich. He was a better man than most in that town: he had his own napkin ring when most men in town ate their tea in singlets. If you needed any further proof of his character, you just had to look down: nobody's shoes were shinier.

But, assuming that he wasn't a doctor (which, it must be noted, was never established in court), and he therefore wasn't the Doc, who was he? Who else could he be? Even without the amnesia, he sounded — at least if you read the lurid pages of *The Chronicle* — like somebody else, almost a stranger, who, though he'd never lied

to me about anything, never told me anything much either, so there was no way for me to know who or what that made me. The past might well be another country, but this was uncharted territory: Here Be Panthers.

Even if any of Clackett's outrageous allegations were true, there was no acknowledgement whatsoever of the genius of my father, who had established a thriving practice and hard-earned reputation, regardless of his supposed qualifications (or lack thereof). Even if he wasn't a doctor, his skill and intelligence and sheer professionalism could not be doubted, even if everything else might have been. There's no doubting the intellect and ambition of doctors who've actually been to medical college — even dull, cantankerous old Dr McLeod down Wilga way, who'd taken over at the Base Hospital after my father was carried away. But if, as alleged, my father *wasn't* a doctor, how *brilliant* must he have been to practise without any formal training or verifiable qualification? Or to establish a thriving practice from virtually nothing and build such a hard-earned reputation? Or to serve the District so wonderfully and unimpeachably for so long? Let alone via the muddy back lanes and sordid milieus Clackett accused him of traversing?

When Dean Moran's layabout dad Gunna started pretending he was a diviner, nobody paid him much attention, even when he didn't find a drop of water. So why were my father's alleged, supposed crimes so much worse? When Doctor Barnardo of the Children's Homes was prosecuted for falsely claiming to be a doctor, did it make him less of a man? Did he save any less children? Nobody died because of my father's treatment, even if the unusuality of many of the cases he encountered in his otherwise long and distinguished career were, sadly untreatable. Everybody knew Mal Moran was a drunken fool; yet they punished my father far harder because he didn't happen to be what they thought he was. But that didn't change *who* he was. And, I have to say, me either: it's due to my father's influence in matters of cleanliness, mannerliness and preciseness that I've grown up to be what I am today.

IF THERE'S ANY BETTER PROOF OF THE INCONGRUENCY of the law, it's this: they say Physician heal thyself, yet anybody who represents themselves in a court of law has A fool for a client. But it's a measure of my father's concern for us that he chose to fight his case on his own impassioned, eloquent terms than fritter away what little

savings he had managed to put aside on the spurious services of Mr Goodrich, who'd unsuccessfully represented Boyd Moran on those car theft charges (though to be fair to Mr Goodrich, nobody probably could have gotten Boyd off). That, and the bail costs had wiped him (and us) out.

The Crown's case rested on three charges: that without any verifiable identity, his records similarly untraceable at the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, my father could be suspected of illegal entry and impersonating a medical practitioner; and that, in the course of prosecuting this fraud, he had additionally concocted, along with his fabricated qualifications, various medications which, according to the Government Medical Officer, had no pharmacological or medicinal value whatsoever.

Who was it that said that necessity was the mother of invention? And that doubt was its father?

My father cheerfully acknowledged that many of the medicaments he'd invented consisted of nothing more than sugar and conviction. Even if nobody was necessarily cured because of them (given so many conditions he encountered were chronic and often incurable beyond the medical advances of the time), nobody *died* either. Even as a direct result of his prescriptions. But nobody acknowledged the savings my father made to the newly-established Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the public purse, dispensing his anodynes and wisdom instead of much more expensive drugs, which, as he pointed out, weren't much more efficacious without the belief his bedside manner and prescriptions offered.

And as my father argued in his defence, nobody — least of all him — ever suggested that despite their wide-ranging therapeutic benefits, from asthma to ulcers, osteoporosis to dermatitis and more, a placebo was ever a panacea.

Given his dedication to the facts, pure and simple, I have no doubt had my father had his chance to present his case he would have amply and eloquently refuted all the charges against him. But in the course of saving so many lives in the District and purchasing — sometimes at personal expense — the equipment and ingredients necessary to treat his patients, he had neglected to save much money, other than enough to cover the barest contingencies. As a result, he preferred to prepare his own defence, rather than fritter it away on the spurious services of Mr Goodrich, who'd

failed to get Boyd Moran off (though to be fair to ‘Flash’ Gordon, nobody probably could have).

To think my father, whom I’d always thought so big and strong; in whose big boar arms, cabled with veins, I’d once imagined I’d be swallowed up; who I had no doubt was the cleverest, strongest, bravest man in the world (and still don’t, I might add), should have succumbed to that old adage might be considered ironic. But like my father, I’m disinclined to such literary indulgences.

Our mother couldn’t say quite why or what made him wade out into the choppy, churning waters of Mystery Bay that day — she’d chosen to remain in the Scout Hall with the rest of the evacuees, while my brother stayed with Snowy and my father lived above the Trinity, the Borrigan Doon Pub, as he prepared his case. And if they hadn’t talked much before, they were hardly going to start now. Perhaps all the worries of my recovery — and recovering his name and hard-earned reputation — had compelled him to reflect by those relentless waves, thrumming with unanswered questions, unreliable answers, lack of order and all that. After all there weren’t many places he was welcome in the District, and with everything going on, there wouldn’t have been many people down there that time of evening.

At first, there was uproar, stoked by the usual suspects, that he’d absconded. But it was Wally Clifford that found him, floating like a piece of blue, flinched driftwood in the reefs between Desolation Sound and Blackfell Point — had the post-mortem been conducted with even the barest professional care, it would have been clear he hadn’t jumped (although admittedly, I cannot confirm this). He’d been carried away by the treacherous tide off Echo Beach to fatal shores, and his ashes were barely cold before *The Chronicle’s* smug and insensitive editorial about justice denied. Although the apparent cause was drowning caused by misadventure, Dr Macleod revealed that during post-mortem, there was no water in his lungs: on his death certificate, the doughty doctor recorded *Massive Myocardial Infarction Caused By Splenetic (White) Infarction*. He may as well have registered *Death Caused By A Broken Heart (Killed By The Chronicle, Which Then Tried to Imply Until Distracted By News of Gunna Moran Falling Under the Borrigan Express That My Father, Of All People, Had Faked His Own Death After Driving Him to Such a Death by Accusing Him of Faking His Own Life)*. One can only imagine the stress and duress under which my father must have laboured, for such a diagnosis to have come so out of the blue.

With the bail forfeited and the MLC Assurance then refusing to honour my father's life insurance benefit on presumption of suspected fraud and possible suicide, Uncle Bob and Aunty Flo, Mrs Curry and the Mundeys tipped in what they could to assist our mother with the funeral expenses (Old Earl, for all his talk, was conspicuously absent, reflecting my father's own long-held suspicions about the perfidy of publicans). He wasn't even buried along with his name, and nobody came with her when she picked up the cheap plastic urn in which his ashes were interred from the Hulme Brothers' Funeral Home.

—One thing I'll say, our mother added, as if there was anything left to add or say. He never said a bad word about any of his accusers, and whatever problems we'd had or the allegations against him, he always tried his best to do the right thing by them and you. And whatever else he may have been, he'll always be your father.

All I had left of my father, of our town, of my childhood, of everything and nearly everyone I'd loved and remembered, were ashes. Not so much infinity in a grain of sand as the world as I knew it and remembered it stuffed into a black plastic box labelled N & X Hulme, Funeral Directors 121 Sundowner Road, Borrigal.

But that, in the end, was all news to me, having been in a coma for nearly forty days; and before I even had time for it to sink in, we'd already gone. The only thing that seemed real at all any more in the delirious months to follow were his case histories, not even his face, which I could not remember for the life of me.

Case History 12: Pseudo-Hyperthymic Anterograde Regressive Amnesia

THERE ONCE WAS A GIRL (DOCTOR BLACKWELL BEGAN, CLEARING HIS THROAT AT the lectern) who, having been able to remember everything, forgot everything else, including herself.

The literature (he said, referring to his notes), most notably the work of Parker, Cahill and McGaugh of the University of California, Irvine, has documented countless cases of anterograde amnesia, usually caused by great emotional or head trauma or rarer cases of so-called acquired savantism, in which such injury causes the patient to develop hitherto creative or mathematical abilities. However, what makes this case so unusual and of particular note is that as a consequence of the initial incipient amnesia caused by major head trauma (due to the patient being crushed by falling tree branch during the infamous and tragic Black Wednesday fires of a few years ago), resulting memory recovery was, in relation to events before the injury, perfect to the point of near-total recall.

While the patient found it difficult to form or remember new events, their recollection of all the events leading up to the injury were perfect — so perfect, in fact, that in initial stages of treatment, it was suspected that they may have been fiction, given how detailed and vivid these memories were.

We all know (he went on, pointing to the first slide) how imperfect and contextual memory is, and how memories change to fit the shifting narrative within every individual's consciousness. However, this patient soon proved — with as much corroboration as could be provided by family members, but without the benefit of definite or tangible documentation, which was lost in the fires — to be one of only eleven identifiable, verifiable cases of hyperthymia, also colloquially known as 'piking,' in which affected individuals have preternaturally enhanced autobiographical and episodic memory, typified by three important characteristics:

1. Hyperthymic patients spend inordinate amounts of time obsessively thinking about their pasts;

2. Their memories are not limited to remembering or describing specific events from their personal experience;
3. And they can remember in the minutest details specific personal events, as well as additional trivial information, such as the date, weather, what people may have said or worn on any given day.

Although most confirmed cases of hyperthymesia should not be confused with other advance memory conditions, usually related to the calendrical calculatory abilities of idiots savants; the photographic memory of individuals with eidetia; or Luria's study of Solomon Shirevski, a hyperthymestic synaesthetic who was able to deliberately memorise virtually infinite amounts of data, most hyperthymesics have an intensely personal autobiographical 'mental almanac' which they can educe on demand, and their memorial abilities in other respects are otherwise normal.

The patient, whom I dubbed 'Fuñesia' after Borges, who first fictionally identified the condition, is unusual in that she cannot recall much of the time subsequent to her injury. This means she cannot form new attachments nor does she consider the present as 'real' or as 'actual' as she does the past. In fact, the only thing she considers real *is* the past — specifically, the period of three months between the only blue moon of the year in on 25 August up to the Black Wednesday fires of 17 December that year.

What makes her additionally interesting is that unlike other hyperthymesics, she can only remember accurately between these specific dates, and her memory is limited not to what people wore or world events, but what she or those around her said on any given day — and most fascinatingly, what she or those around her were eating. If you asked her about anything outside these dates, her memory would be as imperfect and unreliable as any of our own.

The patient suffered greatly as a result of her injuries, both physically and psychologically, suffering third degree burns to over half her body (on her back, legs, hands and parts of her face) which have required extensive skin grafting. Moreover, as well as being seriously injured, and being in an induced coma for nearly six weeks, she also suffered the loss of her father, a prominent doctor, whom she idolised, and who at the time of his death — unbeknownst to her — was facing serious criminal charges.

The resulting destruction of her hometown, which was ruled a natural disaster zone by the new Fraser Government, resulting in the evacuation and resettlement of its entire population, meant that on waking from her coma, everything she had once known was now no longer. When she woke, she was completely amnesiac, not recognising her surviving family nor anything of her past.

Although every effort was taken to reacquaint her with her new reality and to refamiliarise her with her surviving family, like most anterograde amnesiacs, the recovery of her memories (via a photograph furnished by her mother) was deeply traumatic, and it is possible that this event triggered what must be the first case of post-traumatic hyperthymesia.

After extensive testing, it became clear to me and my fellow researchers that there was no possible way that the patient was ‘fudging’ the results or fabricating any responses. Testing and observation were long and difficult, given her physical and psychological injuries, but given her medical parentage, Fuñesia was usually happy to co-operate with any procedures requested and performed, especially in relation to developments in neurology and neurosurgery, which advance further and further every day, especially in world-renowned centres like the Mayo Clinic and Cedars-Sinai Hospital in the United States; Royal Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick; St Andrew’s Memorial Hospital, Brisbane; and the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in Bangalore, India.

Unfortunately, the technology does not exist that will allow this patient, at least, to start remembering the present or immediate past, but she can and does take some comfort from being able to remember that specific period in such vivid and immediate detail.

With a combination of regular medication and on-going psychiatric care, Fuñesia may be able to move beyond the debilitating schism of her perfect but specific hyperthymesia and her unreliable and confusing amnesia.

We need not delve further into Fuñesia’s singular case history or tragic personal circumstances to consider the possibilities for treatment of amnesiacs and Alzheimer’s patients. Her story offers tantalising possibilities not only for memory recovery methods but for the treatment of patients suffering post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS).

Who knows what the future holds for her, especially when the present seems so constantly slippery and difficult to grasp? I must confess that I have taken a particularly close interest in her case and in her as an individual, and though I appreciate that as medical professionals, we must consider patients in light of their symptoms, we must remember that they, like us, are human beings too. With no-one else to care or look out for her, and given how much valuable data her suffering has given us, I am sure you would agree it's the least we can do (he told me he said, to subdued applause and motions of thanks).

12.

MY CHILDHOOD, LIKE OUR TOWN, LIKE EVERYTHING I THOUGHT I ONCE knew, now seemed nothing more than a half-remembered dream. Yet, like a dream, overlaid and embroidered with fantasies of what might have been or could have been or ‘bloody well shoulda bin,’ replayed over and over and over again so that each alternate future became its own memory, its own reality, difficult to distinguish from what might have actually happened, I can clearly — as far as I’ve tried with much difficulty to forget — remember that moment, the moment I realised each day from then on would be like my last, that everything I’d always known and remembered was just a dream, an imagined illusion. Life is but a...

Where I’d once woken in fright from whatever childish night terrors had filled my dreams, safe in the knowledge that my father — if he wasn’t on rounds down the Base Hospital — would be there to comfort me, I now only woke up to an even deeper sense of dread: bitter reality, which seemed even more and more unreal, was inescapable, and I had no way of navigating the rough seas and perilous reefs on my own. The foreseeable future, without my father was like the vague, unwritten borders of the Here Be Panthers maps in his study. Who knew what wicked things would come this way now?

No matter how optimistically I tried to regard what lay ahead, it struck me, as I lay sweating and alone under the cloying doona, that I’d never feel as safe or happy again. And though I shut my eyes tight against that never ending night, I knew I’d never see anything the same way again.

Although, now, the past seems so much surer and real than anything the future might hold. Sometimes seems realer than the present, to be honest.

WITH NO REMAINING TIES TO THE DISTRICT, AND THE TOWN WIPED from the map as if it had never existed, we moved to the Smoke, where it was hoped I could receive better medical treatment for my injuries and amnesia. Moreover, since my father was

carried away, we'd been 'tarred with the same brush' according to some, most loudly Mr Tuttle. And feathered, to add insult to injury, for good measure.

Grownups' problems force you to grow up, and without having done anything, without having seen anything, without having said anything, they become your responsibility. Where before it had once felt as if every extra lolly down the Shops or kindly g'day down the Boatshed had meant as much as if I'd earned them myself, the ensuing silence had felt just as much my fault, even if I'd done nothing, seen nothing, said nothing.

We ended up in a poky little workman's cottage in Rozelle, in Memory Lane, off Darling Street, staying with a couple we discovered were our mother's own parents.

My mother's mother — even less like my idea of my grandmother than my mother was to my still fuzzy head — told us to call her Mumma as she handed us the biggest slice of cake I'd ever seen. She looked at us with shining eyes, the little bells on her beard-ribbons trembling with something between sadness and joy. My mother's father, a small, swarthy, wiry man with a hang-dog face and lurching limp, told us his name in a thick, spluttering accent I'd never heard before (but guessed was a variety of Wog). When I called him Nudge, everybody laughed, even our mother and my brother, whose laughter I couldn't remember ever hearing. Their new-found happiness only seemed to stoke my own simmering resentment. It seemed too soon to laugh or sing, if I could ever laugh or sing or believe anything again.

Mumma had heaps of stories, which she loved telling in a playful voice, punctuated by Nudge's occasional, timorous corrections.

— Yers, as I was saying, I think me great-great grandfather was a Chinaman, yew know —

— Oh, Mumma, not zis again! Nudge called out from the lounge room, one ear on the Wyong Races, the other on the facts.

— Who asked yew, ya drongo? That's why me feet are so dainty — all the Chinese women useta bind their feet, and it got passed down —

— Mumma! You as Aussie as I are! If you so Chinese, how come your grandfazzer's name was O'Malley?

— Ya dill, Attila Kiss! I'm not talking about me great-grandfather, I'm talking about me great-great! And his name was O'Chee. And I never said I wasn't Aussie, Mumma retorted, her beard frizzing with annoyance. What are ya? Racist? But you can't deny— She'd put her fingers to the corners of her eyes and stretch them into almonds, mouthing 'U-n-g-a-r-i-a-n-s.'

— See, love? How come when we're down the Bowlo Mrs Goh always smiles at me and gives us those free prawn crackers, ay? she said, loud enough for Nudge. *She* can tell, she knows — *we* know, she said. And 'sides, if I'm not, how come I like Chinese food so much then, ay?

(sometimes, though, she was descended from a Maori princess; at others, a Filipino warrior; if she was really drunk, Manganinnie. She seemed to be as many things as people, depending on the mood and the company. Like it seemed her daughter, my mother, whom I now barely recognised, her cheeks as wreathed in smiles as Mumma's was in beard-bells, had become)

It was all so confusing, as though the pieces I'd just put in place were being thrown back onto the table and rearranged before my very eyes, like a game of backgammon with no aim or end, all the dominos toppling just as I'd arranged them. Was I really related to these people? Were they Chinese or Maori or U-n-g-a-r-i-a-n or just plain crazy?

The poky cottage was filled to bursting with mementoes and souvenirs of their unorthodox lives, with music, chatter, laughter, all sorts of strange and colourful and flexible friends, who'd refuse the recliner as they wound themselves into knots on the verandah, nibbling matches or guzzling butter knives.

And that smell, which had always reminded me of our mother, but which I'd never quite been able to put my finger on.

(in the garden as she sunned herself, a great, glossy, barefooted seal, her beard rilling and shining with pleasure, Mumma told me what that smell was. Star Jasmine, lovey, though according to my diary, I subsequently discovered it wasn't real jasmine, but a species of milkweed)

I'd sit amongst this motley collection of pathological specimens and, while I wondered if the Alligator Lady had ichthyosis or what bird flitted on the Illustrated

Man's shoulder, it galled me to think, as I compared myself to this uncle or that cousin, *those freaks!* that I was the odd one out.

My brother took to them all like the proverbial duck to water, laughing in a way I hadn't heard for years. His face cleared and brightened; soon I'd catch him humming some tuneless tune among the blackberries in the backyard as Mumma strummed her ukulele.

Though I was still reticent about this clamouring crowd of supposedly intimate strangers, whom I'd never imagined (and frankly, probably never could have, even if our mother had ever told us about them), I was fascinated by what else might be up there. You never knew what would happen or who'd turn up at any given moment, each day wildly different from the others, so that they resembled a hastily stitched together quilt of clashing colours.

EVERYTHING HID SOMETHING IN THAT HOUSE OF MIRRORS: TRICK latches, false bottoms, secret boxes, every day, something new to deceive or frighten me, much to everybody else's amusement.

Once (according to my notebooks), my mother took me to Luna Park on the ferry. I was (according to them) sick the whole way, and when we got there, I was too nauseous and frightened to go on any rides. Somehow I got lost in Coney Island, trapped in the hall of mirrors. Every reflection was grotesque: dwarfish and obese and drooling long like a string of sick, nightmarish, untrue images that made everyone else laugh but terrified me. But the one that horrified me the most was the one that had no tricks up its half-lit sleeve: the one that revealed what I'd become. Even through my tears, even though I could not look, I couldn't turn away. The more I tried not to look, the deeper and hotter it was burnt into my — well, not my memory, I didn't have one beyond that summer any more — but into me, into whatever labyrinth tangled up inside me, whoever I was.

One afternoon, as I tried to re-read *To Kill a Mockingbird* (though I always lost my place, and read the same pages over and over and over again) in the sunroom on the verandah where we all slept, Nudge limped in, and with a quiet, gentle smile,

pulled a 10 cent piece from behind my ear, the lyrebird winking in the Sydney sun. But nothing seemed magical any more: it all seemed a cheap trick.

— You miss Appa, no? he said. I means, Daddy? It okay, Chocky, he said ('chocky,' my notes told me, meant *kis csóki*, or little kiss, in Hungarian). He is here — here Nudge pointed to my swelling heart, my nipples now starting to wince with Hormones.

— Always.

I wept, and wished I was somewhere else, somebody else. Me, before that summer, when I remembered everything: not now, as the leaves in the plane trees on Darling Street fell, along with my blubbering tears, fluttering into the deep, cold, unfathomable Harbour, where the dying day and water poured to one inexorable rip of darkness, the distant Rocks hanging upside-down in the water.

Time Cures All Wounds, my father always said, but it seemed then that the longer time passed, the farther away it got from me, that some wounds would never heal. Still don't.

When he was drunk on blackberry wine, Nudge would get his accordion out and play polkas and waltzes to which Mumma would leap up and grab my brother for an energetic turn round the lounge room, not caring what she knocked over while the music was playing. She swayed swathed in smiles under her turban, her beard-bells trilling, as my brother sang along, his voice tremulous at first, then swelling with joyous abandon. I couldn't sing, much less dance: not just because my bandages had just come off, but it seemed too soon to sing, to laugh, to live. My father's ashes were barely cold.

Still tender, still raw, I sat it all out.

Then one night, as the evening draped a flesh-coloured breeze over the candy-coloured water lapping Cockatoo Island and the trees on White Horse Point cast long, aching shadows over the rotunda, Nudge played a tune of such sadness and longing that even Mumma fell silent and wept quiet, unpronounceable tears, and, caught in a storm of catsear hair, I'd start to sneeze with recognition and sorrow. Nudge sang it in U-n-g-a-r-i-a-n, but he explained the words as best as he could:

*It is Autumn and ze leafs is fallink
All ze love hass died on ze erf*

*Ze wind is weepink wiz sadful tears
My heart it will hope never for a new spring no more
My tears unt my sorrows is all in vain
People is heartless, greedy unt vicked
Love hass died!
Ze vurld is come to its end, hope is havink no meanink
Cities are vyped out, shrapnel makes ze music
Meadows is coloured red wiz blutt
Zere are dead peoples on ze streets everywhere
So I will say anudder quiet prayer:
People are sinners, Lord, zey make mistakes...
Oh, ze vurld hass ended!*

A terrible flood of memory and regret filled me with raw-skinned pain and hollowing despair, unrelieved by the barest shiver of hope. I cried for Charlie, I cried for our town, I cried for my father, for the tragic, glorious dead and the tragicker, ignomiouser living; and most of all, I cried for myself. I wanted to die, especially when living was so heart-breaking. Death seemed easy, compared to life. But I knew such a thought would have been an insult to the memory of my father, always so professionally and personally dedicated to saving lives. Besides, who else would remember him and his case histories if I did die?

As March wept into autumn, the thunder tumbled and the naphtha-flash of lightning slit the sky, knifing the dark with deadly photographs. I couldn't remember the last time I'd felt the rain, but I stayed inside, my demurrals bitten off by the wind, burning with umbrage as our mother and my brother frolicked in the soft archery of the rain, the juice of those alien Sydney skies dripping down their sodden, gurgling faces.

Then, I thought, for all its thoughtless laughter, April in Memory Lane was the cruellest month, as though the cold months to follow would offer any further consolation, every day, subject to our mother and eccentric grandparents' whims, bringing none of the routine certainty I'd once enjoyed and shamefully taken for granted: only more and more and more doubt, each qualm more incredulous and suspicious than before.

I NOTE MY DIARY (WHICH DOCTOR BLACKWELL INSISTED I KEEP) TELLS ME I DIDN'T return to regular schooling for months; the burns and the skin graft operations and the amnesia put paid to that. By the time I'd gotten out of hospital, I found, after missing so much school, there wasn't much point in trying to catch up, either with my studies or my brother, who'd already moved out to a squat in Redfern with some mates, including Snowy Shillingsworth, who worked the ferries dissecting the Harbour under Luna Park's leering grimace while my brother danced his merry dance.

Besides, if I was self-conscious before, the Hormones had made me, with my back stripped and raw, like the warped spine of an old dog, the crusty remains of my skin stuck under your nails, painfully conscious of the pitying stares of everybody around me. Sydney girls were white and angry-tongued. I spent a lot of my time in my room off the verandah, brooding about my father, and even I could see that, even with the maths I didn't have, I'd never become a doctor like my father. But with the publication of that book, I knew that while I could never now ever be a writer either, my life had found its purpose: to remember my father and rehabilitate his hard-earned reputation.

But until then, life went on, its little rhythms only slightly out of tune, as though my father's part in the melody of our lives had only been a minor one, like my awkward, barely heard clanging of the triangle at that second-last Speech Day concert. Each new today became tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, creeping in its petty pace from day to day, as it would until the last syllable of recorded time, measured by the bong of the prayer gong and the bubble of lentil stew, *darl*.

According to the diary, my brother, now (like our mother) somehow miraculously finding his voice, started singing more and more, and was encouraged by Nudge and Mumma to indulge his and our mother's artistic whimsies, eventually becoming Doctor Frank-N-Furter's understudy in Jim Sharman's revival of *The Rocky Horror Show*, along with his childhood idol Molly Meldrum as the Narrator. Had my father been accorded a proper burial, I imagine he would no doubt be spinning in his grave, just as my brother twirled and tittered in the skimpiest women's clothing.

The diary says it was left to our mother to continue any further study in our family. She took a free degree at Sydney University in women's studies, working part-time at a feminist bookshop in Leichhardt, before moving with me into a rambling, crumbling mansion in White Bay, filled with the sound of wymmminly

roaring and the not-always unpleasant aroma of cumin and patchouli. In addition to her studies, she began meditating with her friends in the ‘community’ — though the practice involved less quiet contemplation than a lot of moaning and gong-banging.

The house — or *commune*, as our mother’s new friends liked to call it — was always filled with ardent disciples and pictures of a wan-looking old man with a long beard and a distant look, and a scary-looking woman with a ginormous beak pointed as a fervent arrow to her wide, unsmiling mouth. Sri Auryanandacharya was apparently a very powerful and holy man: some, like our mother, even said (with wide, manic eyes and wider smiles that looked, in the smoke-heavy light, like rictuses) he was God Himself. The woman was called The Mother, a wonderful, wise, beautiful, brilliant woman, who loved everyone, though she looked scary to me, her white hair frantic as lightning, her eyes hawkish and unsettlingly familiar. Every morning the acharyas (as they liked to call themselves) would put fresh flowers over their pictures, and light incense. Then they’d bang the gong and moan, a long breathless *ohhhhhhhh. Mmmmm*. When they first started, I hung on expectantly for the *a-mum-ma-oo-ma-mum-ma* to follow, but it never did. They were the wrong Indians.

I can imagine what my father, professionally devoted to scientific rigour and placing his faith firmly in observation and detection, would have made of it all. As noted above, he believed in the facts, pure and simple, and the power of medicine to address most problems. If it couldn’t, it simply hadn’t been discovered yet, he said. But it would be, mark my words, he’d say, touching his nose as he refilled his glass.

(like my father, I like to think myself not disposed to introspection: it seems as pointless as wondering about the beginning of the world, and prone to all the silly misconceptions and feverish superstitions he rightly regarded as irrelevant that such indulgence fosters: giant elephants balanced on gianter turtles’ backs, divine navels, celestial tears, eternal trees, holy cows, rainbow serpents, broken eggs, words washing over water in the darkness... such speculation seemed to crash into the rocks of Desolation Sound... Here Be Panthers)

I remember my father saying The ‘mysterious’ East is actually dirty and teeming and full of liars, believe you me, but how he knew, he wouldn’t say, and I’ll always regret I never pressed him further.

Who knew what to believe any more? I didn't believe our mother when she told me that I may have recognised The Mother from a past life, but the only past life I cared about was the one I'd lost in the fire while I was asleep. I only believed in what I knew, and I didn't believe in anything but my father and his case histories: they were all I knew, all I wanted to know, all I needed to know, not the litany of half-glimpsed faces and already forgotten names that traipsed and clapped and gurned through the commune and tramped over the weedy remains of my adolescence.

Soon every night was Curry Night, and it seemed as if our mother was losing herself in past incarnations and future afterlives, which, when the leukaemia took her, gave her some succour, I suppose, just as I, heartily sick of nut roast, would soon draw my own small comfort from Darrell Lea, one bon-bon at a time.

AFTER SHE DIED, ME NURSING HER AS BEST AS I COULD DESPITE MY LINGERING afflictions and residual resentments, the diary records my brother returning from tour. After the briefest flash of celebrity in a band called (as I recall) Psychopomp and a cover version of a song I noted down — *Time of the Season* (lyrics jotted from *Countdown: What's your name? Who's your daddy? Something something... Has he taken any time to show you what you need to live?*) — he'd been cast in the ill-fated sequel to *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Shock Treatment*, which received as little critical and commercial acclaim as it deserved and had now returned to 'divide the spoils,' as he so indelicately put it, rocking up with his mate, Normie — as Snowy now called himself — who'd joined him in his theatrical fripperies as a stage hand and become, of all things, his personal manager!

They swanned round like they owned the place, which I suppose, despite our mother donating most of what was left after she'd appealed the MLC with the help of her feminist friends to the *ashram* (as they now liked to call it), he did. Normie — Snowy — didn't say much, apart from saying in a soft, husky voice I'd forgotten How sad I am fer ya, and yer loss. I liked ya mum, she wuz a top bird and she wuz wanna the few who wuz ever nice ta me, apart from Andy. Me deeperest condolences.

Still, he didn't say anything when my brother sniped behind his grubby hand without even bothering to lower his voice, Geeze! She's as big as a hatful of arseholes! It was all I could do not to turf them out then and there. Not that I had to wait long. There wasn't much to speak of after she'd donated the rest to the commune, and they soon made scarce. (No need to make a song n' dance about it, my brother yelped out the taxi window. The cheek!)

Last I'd heard, I think they'd flitted to San Francisco, strutting and frittering away what little of my brother's inheritance on all sorts of half-baked, crackpot schemes and the kind of dissolute, intemperate lifestyle I'm sure even our mother would have disapproved of. I don't think I heard any more from him. It's been so long the only thing I'm sure of now is that he must be dead: really dead, deader than he is to me now, deader than my father ever will be. As dead as me.

IN ADDITION TO MY MEAGRE SHARE OF THE ESTATE, I KEPT ONE THING from Normie and Les (as my brother called himself then): a small, battered tin trousseau our mother had kept under her bed, bringing it with her from the ruins of our old house. In it, letters, postcards, newspaper clippings, bits and pieces and scraps of paper, all fragments of a puzzle with pieces missing. And a journal with a sawn-off lock, written in faint ink and a hand as small and scurrying mouse prints, all these things she'd left, all without use, all without meaning now, except a sign that somebody who had once been living now was dead.

Although my father would have thought of himself a collector — his books, his medical implements, the curios of his long and distinguished career, which he kept on the top shelf of the big bookshelf in his study, safe out of reach — I guess I'm a hoarder.

Even though I have nothing of that time but our mother's trousseau and my father's case histories, my heart — unlike the trousseau or even my head — seems to have an much greater, if no more infinite capacity, holding on to more and more of that summer and my father until he was carried away, until there seems little room for anything else.

I keep everything, labelled and filed away. The letters, the clippings, the journals. I have to. Everything's proof, an artefact, a reminder that everything was once real: that we once existed. You can hold an old scrap of blanket, grey and sticky with countless fingerings, smelling the traces of the baby you once were; you can examine a photograph, faded and crossed with fingerprint creases, feeling the grit of sand at once both hot and cold; a love letter, written in hope and mailed across time and space; and even the smallest splinter will remind you and make you real, even if that reality is long-ago no longer.

But all I had and all I have left is our mother's trousseau, not so much filled with precious treasures as circumstantial evidence and dead ends which made everything feel even more unreal than ever before. Especially me, for all the heaviness of my spoiled, singed, patchwork flesh, shiny as crackling.

Epilogue

THE HISTORY OF YOUR PARENTS IS LIKE THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD. IT JUST IS, JUST until it *wasn't*. In the beginning, forever and ever amen... and then. You don't know all the details, you don't even bother to ask. It was only later, after much dissemblance and discussion, when others tried to suggest otherwise, that they knew the truth about everything, that I became interested in establishing the facts. Or at least those best available to me.

When I was a little, I didn't think about how my parents met, or what they were like before they married, or even what they were like before I was born. I couldn't imagine anything before that. They, like me, like our town, like the whole entire great world, just *were*.

(funnily enough, years later, when some academic suggested that Major Fulbright may have actually been Captain Twilight, who'd murdered the mysterious Potter, I felt almost the same way as I would when I discovered what I'd always thought I'd known about my parents, and myself, wasn't. But unlike my parents, especially my father, The Major and the Captain and Potter's ghost were far away in the past; they may as well have been in another country)

I remember once, looking at some old photos my mother had carelessly left on the kitchen table, asking her when the world had stopped being black and white? Rather than scooping them up, as she usually did, she burst out laughing, wiping the tears from her eyes with the back of her hand, as the whisk dripped yolk on the lino. I never did understand what was so funny.

It was if my parents were a collection of jigsaw puzzle pieces and scraps of paper, old, blurry photographs and recipes written in an unrecognisable hand. A collection of symptoms, my father might have said.

—That's your mother's side, my father would say if he reproved us for being tardy or noisy or messy (even though our mother had always kept our house spotlessly clean, always scrubbing and washing and sweeping and polishing). For anything. But how could we know, when we didn't know anything of her side then, much less her past? And if we knew nothing of our parents' pasts or of them, how sure could we be of ourselves?

(although as I discovered in the poky cottage and the chaotic commune, my father was right in that regard about our mother's side, as he was in regards to almost everything)

Even the little scraps and snippets my father sometimes let slip were inadvertent, rather than deliberate. When you're at sea... he once said, and then, distracted by my brother, up to something or other, changed tack. And when I held up that dropped thread for him to continue his yarn, he demurred: and that, along with the Here Be Panthers charts in his study, was all I had to go by in navigating that imaginary map I had of him, the borders fuzzy and indefinable, even if the features were drawn in brilliant relief.

If I thought our mother would — or even could — shed some light on things, I was dreaming. She was never much for talking anyway, as I soon learned to be, thanks to all those sharp looks at practice; and if she'd never talked about it before, she was never going to start. She was always adamant she knew as little as we did. How could you marry someone you barely knew, I wondered?

—Does anybody really know anybody they love? The tone of her reply cautioned me then from pressing further. Ancient history. Water under the bridge. Another country. Forget about it. The subject of my father and everything that had happened was as closed as her bedroom door, the key to it hung on a chain round her neck.

Then, in subsequent research, it was revealed that my father wasn't my brother's father: he was mine alone. Although my father's name, the name I knew him by, the name he gave me, was clear and proud on my birth certificate, on my brother's only *Father Unknown* was entered. Although on reflection, that might have been an apt entry for my pedigree too.

Did we ever wonder why we looked so different? Why I was dark like my father, even though my brother had a stranger's eyes? At the time, I suppose I would have attributed it to recessive genes, but speaking for myself — as I could never presume to speak for my brother, even if we were still speaking — it had never occurred to me. But it now seemed so obvious, I wondered how I'd never seen it.

—We all have twenty-twenty vision in hindsight, I remember overhearing Mr Ballantyne the optometrist once say to my father at a barbecue. I didn't understand

what he meant — I was too young to focus on its significance then. But I do now, believe me, having had more than enough time to reflect on that.

Their fraught relationship, which my father had, in more charitable moments, blamed on the Hormones, seemed the consequence of other, more doubtful secretions. But it seemed, with that revelation, that we weren't so much a family — let alone the Doc's family — but strangers tenuously tied together by a thin pulse of unprovenanced blood and a name we couldn't even be sure was ours, locked in a house we could never return to.

What did that make us? My brother, for one, didn't seem to mind his unknown father; he just seemed glad mine wasn't his. And though in the end my brother and I were estranged, before that happened, I did try to see beyond the degrees and fractions. Our mother was still our mother.

And whoever he was or ever once was, he was still my father; whatever he did or he'd done, he was still my father; wherever he'd come from, he was still my father; and nothing he or anybody else said or did could contradict or erase those facts.

A man can be an ex-husband, a former sailor, an alleged anything — any number of things in lives and times past and present and future: but once he becomes a father, he cannot ever stop being one, can he? Any more than a child can stop being his.

And whoever he was or ever once was, whatever he did or he'd done, wherever he'd come from, he still made me who I am today, particularly in relation to cleanliness, politeness and preciseness.

MY FATHER ALWAYS LAUGHED IRONICALLY (EVEN THOUGH, AS NOTED ABOVE, HE was disinclined to such literary indulgence), that patients carry on, unthinking, unfeeling of the unseen places of their bodies, until their teeth loosen, their noses bleed, their skins itch, their legs cramp, their backs spasm, their heads ache, their hearts break...

Somehow, like a wobbly, aching tooth, everything I knew, and thought I knew, suddenly became unrooted. All we'd had was each other, and our position in town, as the Doctor's Family. Nothing more intimate than social standing to guide us.

And like a tooth which I'd never considered until it started to ache, things I'd never considered before started to nag me: I couldn't help keep touching the gaps in those toothy doubts, even as each graze inflamed them even more to the quick. Not just Who Am I? but Who Was He? They seemed intrinsically, intimately related.

Without my father, without his name, without any sense of who he was, everything (like the not knowing anything about him) made it even difficult for me to know who I was, exactly. Still does: the question's still just as pointed, and what answers I've managed to track down still just as perplexing, only leading to more troubling questions that as I get older I shy away from asking: There Be Panthers.

But then, do we ever really know who our parents are? Can we ever? Even those with long pedigrees face history's obliviousness: we only have their word — somebody's word — that the names are real on the family tree, long after the events and lives have been forgotten. Who can say what colour hair their great-great grandfather had, which colour he liked best? Let alone what our parents' lives — their secret childish joys, their past adolescent heartbreaks, their abandoned youthful dreams — were really like before us? Let alone the sorrows they must have nursed in the secret places of their hearts to save us from even a whiff of their darkest fears?

What does being unable to imagine them then, not knowing who they really were once, let alone who they really were, make of our idea of ourselves, of knowing who we really are? I imagine my father would have laughed: You make your own life, your own fortune, your own fate, your own name. And there was no better exemplar of that fact than him.

But how do you make your own father again, from such a mishmash of shrapnel and shards, the splinters and symptoms left behind?

In the course of my research, I learnt the hard way that there will always be a great, unfathomable, unknowable part of our parents that will always be hidden from us. And, as a result, an even greater part of ourselves kept secret from us, as though the key to it all was always hung on a chain around our own necks.

AND I'D ALREADY REALISED, AS SOON AS I REMEMBERED CHARLIE AND HOW WE'D parted, that I'd never love again as I had then. When you're in love, you can't

imagine not ever feeling as alive ever again, even if that aliveness is fraught with as much doubt and fear and disappointment as joy. My father would always exhort us — especially my brother, sleeping again — to Live Each and Every Day As If It Were Your Last. I'm not sure I ever started. After our mother died, I half-lived like a nun, a hermit — no, a hermit crab, a ragged pair of claws, scuttling across the floors of silent seas, searching everywhere in that deep unfathomable ooze for my father, and only finding the same only unanswered questions, unreliable answers, lack of order, clammy with that old rank smell.

To discover that you'll never fall in love again as you had once is to die a little inside, and a little more every day after that, until one day is your last, and you realise with a cold, empty heart that you never really lived at all. To love is to believe. And to not love...

Dr Blackwell told me I was reading too much into it. You think too much! You need to let go. The past is done, the future's yet to happen; today is tomorrow's yesterday. You make your past every single day.

But isn't that the wound of the past? Forgetting what you most want to remember, and remembering what you most want to forget? According to my notes, when I first presented to Doctor Blackwell he explained our work together would attempt to retrieve my memory: if it was successful, the past would be recoverable. I note he noted something when I wondered if it was irrevocable.

Some of the books our mother brought home from the bookshop — *Women Who Love Men Who Hate Women*, *I'm Okay, You're Okay*, *Choosing To Love* and all the rest — suggest that you can choose to love. I'm not so sure. You can choose to hate: boongs, curry munchers, wogs, poofs, pinkos, anyone or anything — but you can't choose to love. I wish I could have loved somebody else, anybody else, than the people I have, who have more often than not, not loved me as much as I have loved them, or, if I'm being honest — and Dr Blackwell tells me I should be — I loved love itself. Who would submit themselves *willingly* to the delicious agonies of love?

— You, says Dr Blackwell, rubbing and re-rubbing those sweet, aching bruises in all the secret, tender places of my heart. You and poets. Your bitterness is eating you up, like cancer. You need to close the page on that chapter, he said.

— How?

— You know what to do. Just look in your heart.

As if! I couldn't even face the mirror. Like my mother's trousseau, I didn't want to peer any further into that Pandora's Box, held together only by fraying string and forgetfulness. Who knew what I'd find in there? The only box I liked looking into was a Darrell Lea selection, my only consolation (And cut down on the chocolate, Dr Blackwell added. Everything in Moderation!)

It may have been easy for our mother to fall in love with somebody she didn't know — and she kept doing it, with a succession of men each shadier than the one before, until she fell in love with Sri Auryanandacharya. But I wasn't sure I could fall in love with anybody when I didn't even know myself. You think all you need to do is *love* when all you really want to be is *loved*. Or was it the other way round? I forget now. Perhaps I was situs ambiguous all along.

Besides, the burns and skin grafts and weight that was reflected back at me any time I ever ventured near a mirror, scarier than anything in that hall of mirrors at Coney Island, put paid to anybody ever falling in love with me, so that question, at least, was moot.

Still, love, I've come to realise painfully (and with Dr Blackwell's assistance), is as much forgiving as forgetting. And for giving rather than for getting in return. It's the loving, like the wishing, that's its greatest reward, not necessarily the fulfilment of that wish, or that love; and as I've discovered — equally painfully — when you're really unlucky, you get everything you wished for.

AS DOCTOR BLACKWELL INSTRUCTED, I TOOK MY FATHER'S ASHES TO THE HILLS BEHIND ORANGETREES. THE Fulbrights hadn't returned, like the rest of the town. Orangetrees was now the Charlotte 'Charlie' Fulbright National Park, donated by the Fulbrights to the State, and in the intervening years, the bush had returned, so that it looked as if it had just been discovered. Of course I couldn't see the homestead reclining at the foot of the hill, nor where our town or the roofs of the old church hall and Middle Pub had once been. It was all erased, virgin territory, as though nothing had ever existed, even in memory, as it must have been once, before The Major,

before Captain Twilight, before Potter and his ghost, perhaps even before the Dreamtime.

How the infinite, intimate geography we all map out in our hearts is, as it gets filled with more and more of those empty spaces, those gaps where once people lived but live no more, and with the desolation of what lies in that no-man's land beyond the horizon.

When I'd gotten off at Borrigal to catch the twice-daily bus past our old town, I'd been filled with fear: would anybody recognise me? Of course they didn't, any more than I recognised anybody else. They all stared — they always do — as though I were a towelhead without a turban. And who could blame them? If I weren't me — I mean, if I were them — I'd stare too, though it doesn't make it any easier to get used to, if you ever do get used to it. The shock's bad enough, but it's the pity that really does it. Mr Tuttle wasn't in the Borrigal Arms — he'd have been long-dead now, buried along with his grizzling and his name — but I swear the yammering drunk outside the Trinity was Dean Moran.

When I got off where the old bus stop used to be, and walked through the empty, eerie streets of what was once our town, what remained of the trees murmured disquietly, disparagingly, disconcertingly, asking the old troubling questions: why had I returned? What did I expect to find? Who did I think I was? I wondered then why I hadn't asked those questions myself, but as I discovered in the course of my research, the more questions I asked only led to more questions, leading me further and further to those pantherly places at the edge of the unreliable map I'd been going by. Ghosts and ash swirled about me, making my eyes sting.

But in the lush green moist grass of that back paddock, feeling the shimmering tall pasture's dew-fingers brush against my sandals, echoed streams of strange songs in the cold early sun, breezes whispering in the gums, such questions seemed not so much unanswerable as unimaginable.

And among those high dark cool gum tree cathedrals, their arms outstretched like ink lines in the sky, clear mirrors of light cast in blue and grey, I took out the plastic box I'd been carrying around with me, with so much else, and stabbed it with a pen-knife. The blade cut deep into the cheek of my hand, and my father's ashes marbled as they mingled with my blood and the spring of my tears. They flurried, paused, turned back, and took flight into the whispering breeze, dissolving into motes of

dying light. To have said anything would have been to empty the still and silent sacredness and secretness of that place.

I walked back down through the wind-woven grass, all of a sudden heady with an unbearable lightness, and didn't look back. Not once.

AND THEN, JUST AS IT SEEMED THAT EVERYTHING THAT HAD BEEN SAID AND done would, like our town and everybody in it, be forgotten, and the world, spinning obviously and inexorably, would move on, I was painfully reminded that as long as the words remain, sleeping dogs will never be left to lie.

You'll have probably read that book and even though it will have been sold to you as fiction — as though that were any excuse — you'll probably believe it as truth. After all, nobody remembers old news: today's headlining scoop will always be at the bottom of the budgie cage tomorrow. With just as much shit all over it (if you'll pardon the French). And who would ever remember the noisome nonsense parroted by an obscure local rag like *The Chronicle*? But when it's bound in a book, even a pulpy confection like that, it somehow takes on the authority of truth, purporting to surmount history, even as it subsumes and subverts it.

Without going into any more detail than it deserves, a hack penny-a-liner by the name of Sunil Badami tried making his name with a travesty he had the audacity to call a novel — though other more apt descriptions more readily come to mind, even if names were changed to supposedly 'protect the innocent,' and 'any resemblance to persons living or dead purely coincidental' (there was even speculation that his name was an assumed nom-de-plume, only reinforcing the fraud whoever he was had perpetrated).

A self-conscious imitation of a long-forgotten Lloyd Cassel Douglas or Frederick Thwaites pot-boiler, Badami's novel — submitted as, of all things, a creative writing doctorate — was a mischievous farrago that 'Badami' (or whoever he was) had the gall to claim was 'based on a true story,' even though it was riddled with outrageous fabrications and feverish fabulations. 'Badami' never bothered with any actual research: he never came to town, nor talked to anybody who knew my father, least of all us (although I wouldn't have said anything anyway). He just pulled it out of thin

air, off the top of his head. Anybody who knew my father would have known it was all lies. It was as if he was writing about somebody else, a complete stranger.

To do such a thing to somebody like my father, dedicated through his profession to the facts, pure and simple, was unimaginable. And whatever you make of ‘Badami’s’ credibility, there’s no denying his imagination (even if neither is of any real value in my estimation)...

—Medicine, my father once said in a quiet, tired voice just before he was carried away, is more than just a challenging profession: it’s an obsession. What I think he meant (given that he was not a man prone to emotional outbursts and not here now to explain himself) was that it was more than a desirable occupation, but a vocation, a need to be needed, an overwhelming urge to help; and even if one were to concede that it was an obsession, in my father’s case, it was a magnificent one.

My father lived by his oath and ethics without exception — even when recounting the case histories, which were always educative. Even if he wasn’t a doctor, no doctor lived as rigorously by them. He didn’t take lives: he was dedicated to improving and saving them. Can any writer, even those far more talented than ‘Badami,’ say the same?

Do writers even have a code of ethics? You wouldn’t know from reading anything written about my father — let alone ‘Badami’s’ fabulist nonsense. What right did he have to write about my father (if you assumed that the character he described was my father — and if you knew my father as I did you’d know it was not, could not ever be)?

Still, in comparison to my father’s rigorous adherence to his oath and ethics, writers are hypocritical oafs. Writers doctor history: they steal, they lie, they omit, they distort, they mock, all for money and infamy — and worse, in the name of ‘art’ (I suspect from the blueness of the prose, and his nom-de-plume, that ‘Badami’ was a drunkard or drug addict of some sort, like most writers seem to be).

What they know, they distort; what they don’t, they make up. They call it ‘creative licence’ or ‘imagination’: I suspect there are far more fitting descriptions of what they do. They take lives and dissect them to bits, rearranging the parts and turning them inside out. They assume the identities of their victims, distorting their features, so that only a grotesque hollowed-out caricature remains, smattered in blood and ink with no

thought to anything but the fleeting fame of newspaper literary pages — the futility of which can be read between the mouldering lines of ‘Badami’ or any other forgotten author, writing their names on water.

What’s worse is that people buy it and swallow it with no thought to the consequences, as my father found in his practice. Patients Will Swallow Anything, as he used to say. But what to make of those who willingly swallowed ‘Badami’s’ lies and distortions? Who believe what they want to believe because they *want* to believe, who forgive every ridiculous fallacy as long as it’s *believable*, who suspend their disbelief for the sake of the story? As though the facts were irrelevant, as though they didn’t make their precious story truer?

The case histories my father collected in his long and distinguished career are all verifiable conditions, and any cursory inspection of the *Encyclopaedia Pathologica* will attest to their veraciousness (or whatever the word is meant to be). There are many recorded cases of post-embolismic foreign accent syndrome — this year (or was it last?), a Minnesotan woman, recovering from a blizzard-induced aneurism, began speaking with a pronounced Swedish accent, despite being fifth-generation Norwegian-American and never having left the Twin Cities; there are countless others of acute beta-carotene toxicosis (although the more pronounced leporid symptoms of that case appear to be unique to my father’s experience).

If he changed a name here or excised a detail there, it was not for reckless, needless amusement, but because the moral of the story demanded it; just as I have only edited the diaries and correspondence you’ll find below the bed for cohesiveness and coheriseness. More importantly, it was a measure of his valorous discretion that he did so out of concern for his patients’ privacy and dignity.

That; and as he always reminded us, while he may have always remembered faces, he was terrible with names.

Still, such unsupported supposition is the tarnished tool in trade of the writer — or writers like ‘Badami,’ who hack and saw their way through the truth with little idea or care for the results, the facts haemorrhaging and the fictions contaminating everything. Literature’s not a sterile environment: it seethes with lies and philosophies and unseemly emotions and it’s clear from reading any of the stupendous things written about my father, that the more, the better. Once they were

printed, the lies lived on, even as my father's legacy faded from thought, forgotten, his name irretrievably blackened.

See how fiction insinuates itself into the truth, assuming the proportions of accepted fact, simply by repetition? The more it's retold, the truer it seems: the fiction becomes fact. Or worse: faction. Or is that factition? Whatever it is, *none* of it the truth, believe you me. If poetry has no truth, fiction is all the purest, ugliest lies.

What's even worser is not only that no historian — usually so noisy about the facts and details in other, better researched, better written books — said anything about the blatant howlers and glaring anachronisms in Badami's book: they only needed to have asked me, though that lack of interest reflects how little attention that book deservedly received.

Despite no literary pretensions of my own (that embarrassing poetic juvenilia aside), I'd always hoped I'd write a defence of my father and his hard-earned reputation, even if life's events moved beyond me and I was never able to do so, not just because I couldn't find much more beyond the trousseau to support my convictions. It's strange now, looking back, trying to remember, how quickly things happened, how silently time escaped me. Looking at that old diary I'd kept that summer, much less the notebooks I've had to keep since, I'm struck now by how I remember everything I didn't write even as I cannot remember anything I ever wrote. It strikes me now how like that book, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, my life had become: every day, a blank page, trying to decipher everything that was written before it, every page a re-writing, a re-reading, a revision of everything I cannot remember.

PERHAPS I THOUGHT OR HOPED THAT IF I DID NOTHING, NOTHING ELSE WOULD be said. Perhaps I believed, like my father always said, that Discretion Is The Better Part of Valour. Perhaps I didn't notice how those months I kept my head down, my mouth shut, my self to myself, out of the public eye metastased into years. Perhaps, perhaps, *perhaps*... But it's too late now. Whatever I might attempt to correct now would only add to the noise. And as my father would say, why waste time talking to people who won't listen? As long as you know the truth, that's all that matters. I hope so,

especially as I get older, I'm less sure than ever of what I know, much less what I believe, let alone whatever the truth is, or whoever I am, especially now, as I get older, and what memories I have seem to flit through me, more and more, like catsear hair on a windy day. When they go, what will I have left, apart from myself? Whoever that is?

(besides, as it turns out, incredibly, no publisher saw fit to publish my story and my father's case histories, so they too now moulder, like so many names without faces, in the trousseau under the bed. To think I once checked for Yowies under there, when panthers were lurking all the time! And if you're reading this now, you know the rest. The will should be underneath the last page; I have no instructions for the service as I don't expect anybody will be coming. And I apologise in advance for any lingering smell. Oh, and please check the oven; I will probably have forgotten to turn it off)

How fleeting that summer seems now, and with it, my childhood seemed even briefer, when I knew everything I needed to know, and discovered far more than I ever wanted to! Although my father's scientific zeal and extensive knowledge made a mockery of the proverb, ignorance was, indeed bliss. And how long and hard I've had to reflect on those words, as though I were standing in front of the distorting mirror in Mumma's bedroom, the dancing shapes swimming and distorting before me... forgetting even the simplest words to say what I mean to say, but cannot. Forgetting myself. Again.

Everything's What You Make Of It, my father used to say. If memory isn't irrevocable, does that mean the past isn't either? Let alone the future? After our mother died, I realised with a shock that I was an orphan, alone and on my own in the great, cruel, uncaring, staring, sniping world, caught in the top branches of an unfamiliar tree: my family's, as it turned out, and none of them about to help me down. And, not being able to discover more about my father beyond his case histories and what little remained in our mother's trousseau, I wondered if he too was an orphan. In which case, I realised that just as he'd worked so tirelessly to establish his practice and his hard-earned reputation, I too could make myself, any way I wished. After all, he hadn't needed *his* parents' pedigrees or positions to make his own way and his own name in the great, cruel, uncaring, staring, sniping world.

But you have to know what you want before you can wish for it, and even then — well, it might not be what you need, even if you wish ever came true. Especially if you're not sure who you are. How can you know what you want when you don't know yourself?

Besides, to be honest, I'd much rather be somebody like my father, whoever he was, than anything or anybody else, even — especially — me. And anyway, it's too late for all that now.

Perhaps just as we make our own lives, our own choices, our own mistakes, we make our own histories too. We can believe what we want to believe even as we cannot remember what we want to remember or cannot forget what we want to forget. They say history is written by victors, but who can tell you to remember what you don't, nor to forget what you can't?

If a story exists because it was told, what happens to all those untold stories left unheard or unread, all those secret histories, whispering in the breeze? Maybe they are like a mighty tree falling in the bush with nobody around to hear if it made a sound? Or the spirit of a girl, stolen away by a yowie, flitting through a billabong's murky, watery shadows. Or a doctor who, having devoted his life to the people of a town, is now as vanished as that town and everyone in it. Like all those people like him, like her, like them, like me who nobody ever listens to, do they really exist? Did we ever?

Who cares any more, but me? Like me, these stories are growing old. And like me, I guess, they'll soon be forgotten.

**Exegesis: Novelists of the Past, Historians
of the Present**

Introduction

In 2007, Pierre Ryckmans, writing as Simon Leys, in an essay titled ‘Lies That Tell The Truth,’ observed:

The historian does not merely record; he edits, he omits, he judges, he interprets, he reorganises, he composes. His mission is nothing less than ‘to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth manifold and one, underlying all its aspects...’

Yet this quote is not from a historian discussing history writing; it is from a novelist on the art of fiction: the famous beginning of Joseph Conrad’s preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, a true manifesto of the novelist’s mission.

The fact is, these two arts — history writing and fiction writing — originating both in poetry, involve similar activities and mobilise the same faculties: memory and imagination; and this is why it could rightly be said that the novelist is the historian of the present and the historian the novelist of the past. Both must invent the truth (2007: 43).

Rewriting a picaresque historical novel lost in a catastrophic robbery just after completion (having spent 13 years writing it), I was struck by this idea of ‘memory and imagination’: rewriting what I could remember of the lost novel, and having to imagine what I couldn’t.¹

Ryckmans’s assertion is also pertinent in light of recent debates in the public sphere about history and fiction’s roles and rights in recounting or depicting historical periods and addressing issues of national identity, particularly in Australia. It reveals, by suggesting the similarities between history and fiction, the futility of declaring a dichotomous opposition between the two forms of narrative writing, as has been the case in such recent debates.

While researching *an allergy*, referring to a variety of archival sources and writing in a number of fictional and historical genres, I was struck by how similar many approaches to research and writing (or in my case, rewriting) the novel were to researching and writing an historical account.

¹ For a fuller account, please refer to ‘From the Emergency’ (17 April 2011): <http://verityla.com/from-the-emergency-sunil-badami/> (accessed 19 April 2011).

But Ryckman's assertion also invites us to consider the different rhetorical and discursive methods history and fiction employ to establish believability and convincingly represent or depict past periods, places and people, as well as the ways in which both history and fiction interrogate questions of national and individual identity.

In researching this exegesis, I was also struck by the similarities between writing a novel and writing an academic thesis. Both start with a problem needing to be addressed (if not always resolvable). In commencing the writing, neither the novelist or the academic may have any idea of the answer, or even if there *is* an answer. They both attempt to persuade and convince readers of their vision of that problem, making particular arguments about specific issues and using selective examples to illustrate their points. They both, like the historian, 'edit, omit, judge, interpret, reorganize, compose.'

And they *must*, if their argument is to convince.

However, perhaps writers — whether novelists, historians or academics — like philosophers, shouldn't attempt to offer new answers or even new questions, but rather, new ways of questioning?

Questions, Questions, Questions...

A number of questions occurred to me while researching and re-writing *an allergy*, in light of Ryckmans's assertion, and in the context of the debates that arose during that time around the publication of Kate Grenville's seemingly conventional historical novel *The Secret River* (2005). As a fiction writer, I could not understand the furor. After all, hadn't Grenville, in her response to her critics, argued that not only had she never claimed that she thought her novel was history, but also 'in fact, on countless occasions... was at pains to make it clear [she] knew it wasn't' (2007: 66)? Wasn't what she admitted was her 'shameless rifling through research for anything I could use, wrenching it out of its place and adapting it for [her] own purposes' (2006: 191) what novelists have always done?

With the following appendix, *History*, written as a melange of academic and popular history, features historical and fictional figures and footnotes, endnotes, citations and quotes — some of which are correctly attributed and verifiable; some correct but erroneously attributed; some attributed to actual sources but falsified; and others completely imagined — was I also possibly guilty of the charges being levelled at Grenville (and historical novelists in general)? Historians such as Inga Clendinnen accused her of bowdlerising rigorous historical research; of going beyond the established evidence or facts; for presenting imaginative speculation as historical fact; or worse, not just falsifying history, but falsifying ‘the moral relationships... between writer and subjects, writer and reader’ (1996).

After all, just as a book’s title is often tagged with the tautological identifier ‘a novel’ (in a way that you never see ‘a history’ or ‘non-fictional account’), fiction’s name is as it says, derived from the past participle of the Latin *ingere*, meaning to shape, form, devise, feign; the English word taken from the Old French *fiction*, meaning dissimulation, ruse, invention (Harper 2001–13). Surely any reader who believed anything in a novel ‘really happened’ would be considered naïve by their author?

Ken Stewart asks, ‘when does the novel’s ‘history,’ the words and tropes on the page, become separable from fiction, and how does the fictional scheme affect the meaning of the ‘history’? Why is an artist licensed to rework ‘inaccurately’ or fictionalise anything in the world except the... significant past’ (1997)?

But this doesn’t account for why we consider novels to be ‘lies that tell the truth.’ Indeed, much is made of ‘fictional truth,’ in which novelists, even depicting historical periods, places and people ‘hope to lie [their] way to a greater truth’ (Doctorow 2006).

In examining these critiques and defences of historical fiction, it seemed these defences took a formalist textual aesthetic stance against ideological, contextual, identitarian criticisms, in what David Carter calls the conflict ‘between ethics and aesthetics’ (2001b). Many of these defences and criticisms echoed those in the equally heated debates surrounding what Richard Guillatt described at the time ‘surely Australia’s greatest cultural identity crisis’ (1997: 13), in which, in the space of only a few months at the height of the history– and culture wars, the Ukrainian identity of Vogel, Miles Franklin and ASA Medal-winning novelist Helen

Demidenko was revealed to be untrue; the Aboriginal identity of acclaimed writers Mudrooroo Narogin, Bobbi Sykes and Charlie Wells were suspected; and celebrated Aboriginal memoirist Wanda Koolmatrie was revealed to be a middle-aged white man.

How had these events affected subsequent debates and approaches to history and fiction, much less identity and authenticity?

Literary hoaxing is the ultimate expression of the long fictional tradition of 'false document,' in which fiction assumes the guise of nonfiction, ostensibly to appear more convincing. But it also brings 'together two issues: the history of hoaxing and the hoaxing of history' (King 2010) that is 'inseparable from the wider Australian narrative' (Caterson 2009: 15), given the uncertainty surrounding much Australian history and the prevalence of so many hoaxes in Australian literary history, from George Barrington (1802–) to Louis de Rougemont (1899), Ern Malley (1944) to Marlo Morgan (1990).

How had these phenomena influenced and affected debates, not only about history and fiction, but about identity, both personal, racial and national?

What struck me was how, in this post-colonial, post-modernist age, surrounded by 'reality' television, 'mockumentaries' and 'mash-ups,' we continue to suspend our disbelief reading fiction — not only when it or its author purports it to be true, but even when it or its narrator constantly remind us when it isn't. And yet, when we read history (as opposed, paradoxically, to memoir), especially in the wake of the history wars, we do so critically, looking for factual errors or omissions and ideological bias, despite the plethora of references, cross-references, evidence and objective remove that much fiction foregoes.

And why, despite knowing that autobiography and memoir's subjective testimony is as unreliable as fiction, was there such a demand for them during the so-called 'memoir boom' of the 1990s?

How *do* we read different genres like history and fiction? What discursive methodologies, textual devices or rhetorical techniques do they (or their authors) use to establish our trust as readers and establish believability? And how do we as readers engage with, collude with, believe or resist historical or fictional texts, particularly

the narrative conventions and methodologies and literary and rhetorical devices identified above?

Despite these debates' antagonism, many on both sides of the history and fiction divide acknowledge, like Ryckmans and Conrad (and me), that despite their *fundamental* differences, history and fiction share many *essential* similarities: both are (like academic theses) narratives that seek, by editing, omitting, judging, interpreting, reorganising and composing, to make sense of the world and our place in it.

So how can we recalibrate these debates, critiques and approaches to engage more productively with the range of narrative, literary and rhetorical techniques and devices employed by both history and fiction? How do history, fiction and the genres teeming between them (such as nonfiction, creative nonfiction, memoir, journalism, metafiction and others) interact, overlap, inform or interrogate each other?

And, given narrative literature's *essential* similarities to and the ways in which both history and fiction have in recent years approached and encroached upon each other's traditional discursive boundaries — with historians like Simon Schama using fictive rhetorical techniques; others like Simon Sebag-Montefiore and Jane Kamensky writing historical fiction; novelists like Laurent Binet writing metafictional histories employing historical methodologies; others like Jake Arnott or Wu Ming writing speculative or metafictional historical fiction; and yet others like David Mitchell or Jennifer Egan writing multi-generic novels that featured history and speculative history — much less historical fiction's prevalence on many bestseller and literary awards lists, what do these generic distinctions mean anyway? Are they useful indicators of how to approach such texts, or merely niche marketing terms in an increasingly competitive media environment?

What especially interested me, writing a multi-generic, discursively transgressive novel which features a wide range of fictional and historical genres, was discovering how I could, by identifying the narrative, literary and rhetorical techniques and devices employed by history, fiction, and everything in between to establish believability, do so in a concrete and creative way in *an allergy*.

Approaches

In attempting to answer these questions, this exegesis will examine contemporary debates in the public sphere regarding the roles of history and fiction to examine, interpret, represent and depict the past, particularly in relation to questions of individual and national identity in an Australian context, and especially in regards to the controversy surrounding *The Secret River*.

In such a context, it will examine these debates in the wake of the earlier history and culture wars, in relation to false document and literary hoaxing, particularly in regards to the spate of identity frauds and literary hoaxes arising at the height of the history and culture wars and during the memoir boom in the late 1990s.

It will examine defences and criticisms of history and fiction by historians, including Clendinnen, McKenna, Cassandra Pybus and others; novelists such as Jonathon Franzen, E. L. Doctorow, David Malouf, Grenville and others; critics such as Mark Mordue, Robert McCrum, Mark Lawson, James Wood and others; and academics such as David Carter, Linda Hutcheon, Brian McHale, Camilla Nelson and others; as well as referring to current discussions in the media and public sphere regarding these issues and new developments in literary studies and information technology.

It will then attempt to identify gaps and problems in these criticisms, defences and debates with the aim of not only addressing these gaps and problems but recalibrating their terms to allow discussion on more dispassionate terms.

It will do so by addressing formalist defences by attempting a textual analysis of the range of rhetorical devices and narrative conventions employed by fiction and history to establish believability; identifying those common to both and specific to each; the ways in which each operates to establish believability, regardless of their basis in 'history' or 'fact;' and the ways in which each interacts, overlaps, informs or interrogates each other, with reference to the way they may or do in *an allergy*.

It will draw on the work of Dorrit Cohn, Michael Riffaterre and others to apply this analysis to a selection of selected texts chosen because they encompass the same range of generic forms as *an allergy* and the same period as the following appendix *History*, to investigate the relation between the narrative devices employed and the believability established in different generic accounts of the same subject.

The exegesis will then attempt a contextual analysis of the ways in which readers engage with, collude with, believe or resist historical or fictional texts, particularly the narrative conventions and methodologies and literary and rhetorical devices identified above, referring to the reader response- and contractually-based models of Peter Rabinowitz, Lennard Davis, Christopher Lasch, Ross Winterowd, Peter Shillingsburg and others.

It will then call on the work of Eileen Pollack, Doctorow, McHale, Hutcheon, Caterson, K. K. Ruthven, Maria Takolander and others to examine how the long fictional tradition of false document and the history of literary hoaxing, particularly in Australia, have affected the debates surrounding history and fiction; and discuss the way in which the search for ‘authenticity’ has confused ideas of personal and national identity, particularly in the wake of the history and culture wars, and how this confusion has affected the debates surrounding *The Secret River* and the roles of history and fiction in examining, interpreting, representing and depicting the past and articulating individual and Australian national identity.

It will examine the models proposed by Pollack, McHale and Caterson to distinguish false documents and literary hoaxes, as well as work by Carter, Takolander, Ruthven, Maggie Nolan, Carrie Dawson and others to discuss the controversies surrounding *My Own Sweet Time* and *The Hand That Signed the Paper*, particularly in relation to Lasch’s theories of the narcissistic self, the quest for ‘authenticity’ and the conditions that allowed these hoaxes to occur at the height of the history– and culture wars, and why these debates permeated those surrounding *The Secret River* (and historical fiction in general).

It will then survey recent developments in literary and information technology, as well as the ways in which writers and readers collude with advanced mass culture and marketing to configure their identities, seeking to synthesise these findings into concrete and creative way in *an allergy*, before finally adding what I hope are some pertinent observations about the creative process involved.

History versus Fiction

History and fiction, both facing declining popularity and relevance in relation to memoir, popular history, creative nonfiction or metafiction, much less other media such as film, television and the internet — at least according to critics and writers such as Mark Mordue, David Shields, V. S. Naipaul, Philip Roth and others — have been engaged in fierce debates, especially in Australia, about the other's moral superiority, responsibility and right not just to examine the past, but to articulate current questions of national identity.

Novelists have been crossing into the historical realm in greater numbers, opines E. L. Doctorow (2006), with Mark McKenna claiming that 'the contemporary novelist has become a popular historian' (2006: 96).

But critics such as Mark Lawson object to the rise in popularity of historical fiction and its presence on literary prize shortlists as a timidity or unwillingness by modern authors to engage with the complex problems, issues and realities of the modern world; a failure of imagination; a retreat to the safe distance of the past; or a disingenuous desire to appropriate the literary weight of the classic Nineteenth Century canon (2009).

Such concerns are shared by Jonathon Franzen (1996), who laments the paucity of contemporary social-realist novels, similar to those written by Dickens, Dostoevsky and Balzac or, in an Australian context, Tennant, Park or Herbert, offering 'the reportorial possibilities of fiction as a record of the present' (Lawson 2009).

But with even Philip Roth recently admitting he had stopped reading fiction (quoted in Dalley 2011), is it any surprise that Tom Shone should ask, in response to David Shields's polemic manifesto *Reality Hunger* (2010): 'Have We Given Up on Fiction' (2010)? There are regular pronouncements about 'the death of the novel,' with V. S. Naipaul pronouncing that 'only nonfiction [can] capture the complexities of today's world' (quoted in Donadio 2005a) and Andrew Marr suggesting 'that perhaps, like other art forms, [the novel] is not forever but has a life-cycle of invention, full expression and formal decay. This has been true, after all, of the symphony, ballet, representational painting, the glazed pot' (2001), with non-fiction taking its place to illuminate today's world most vividly (Donatio 2005).

Conversely, history's decline, Wendy James argues, is intimately connected to what is regarded as its increasingly political (and therefore inherently unreliable) bent (2009: 15), with McKenna lamenting that 'one unfortunate by-product of the history wars has been the tendency for historians to be cast in the partisan image of federal politics, as abusive cultural warriors peddling rival versions of the truth' (2006: 98).

Although McKenna calls 'in the spirit of conversation [for] a dialogue between historical novelists and the historians upon whose work [they] often draw' (2006: 102), much recent Australian historiographical antagonism towards historical fiction has been based on two grievances, one ideological, the other discursive and methodological, and both incited by comments made by Kate Grenville regarding *The Secret River*.

When asked 'where [she] would put her book, finally, if [she] were laying out books on the history wars' (Koval 2005) Grenville replied it would be up on a stepladder, looking down at the fray:

I think historians, and rightly so, have battled away about the details of exactly when and where and how many and how much, and they've got themselves into these polarised positions, and... I think that's what historians ought to be doing; constantly questioning the evidence and perhaps even each other... You can set two sides against each other and ask which side will win... or you can go up on the stepladder and look down and say, well, nobody is going to win... What there can be, though, is understanding... the historians are doing their thing, but let me as a novelist come to it in a different way, which is the way of empathising and imaginative understanding of those difficult events (quoted in Koval 2005).

As noted above, Clendinnen's response was vehement, with McKenna asserting that with the rise of 'fictive history' (Daniel 1996), novelists, assuming their art to be superior to history, were 'guilty of eroding the traditional authority of professional historians and elevating fiction to a position of interpretative power over history' (2006: 93–9) and 'mounting a challenge to historians' role as custodians and interpreters of the past' (Clendinnen 2005: 15).

The roots of this antagonism can be found in a number of places. Firstly, historians such as Clendinnen, McKenna, Pybus and others were still reeling from the onslaught of the so-called history– and culture wars, ignited by the elections of John Howard and Pauline Hanson, marked by 'an assault on 'political correctness' of the

Keating era, sceptic[ism] of [the] excesses of multiculturalism, and critical of the 'black armband' view of relations with Aborigines' (Grattan 2006), a concept first coined by Geoffrey Blainey (1993: 11) and adopted, along with his idea of a 'historical balance sheet' by Howard in the Menzies lecture he delivered shortly after being elected that declared the commencement of hostilities (1996).

As David Carter indicates, these wars were typified by very public battles over racial identity, especially present issues of multiculturalism and Indigenous issues regarding contentious points of frontier history (2001), with often heated debates between historians such as Clendinnen, McKenna, Pybus, Lindall Ryan and Henry Reynolds on one side, and Keith Windschuttle, Blainey and others on the other, with 'an implied sense that historians ha[d] let the nation down [and] descended into snarling bands' (McKenna 2006: 101).

Secondly, this antagonism originated in older, on-going discursive and methodological disputes between history and fiction arising from the influence of Leopold von Ranke's influential statement *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (that history should represent the past 'as it actually was'), founded upon academic conventions of citation, reference and adherence to the available evidence. This view of history, according to Hayden White, became a discourse that 'would consist of nothing but factually accurate statements about a realm of events which were (or had been) observable in principle, the arrangement of which in the order of their original occurrence would permit them to figure forth their true meaning or significance... [with] every hint of the fictive, or merely imaginable, expunged' (1978: 123).

As Hutcheon notes, 'in the nineteenth century, at least before the rise of Ranke's "scientific history," literature and history were considered branches of the same tree of learning, a tree which sought to interpret experience for the benefit of guiding and elevating man' (2004 [1988]: 105). This is reflected in Conrad's use of 'historian' for 'novelist' and by White's contention that realist fiction and Rankean historicism shared many beliefs about the possibility of writing about observable reality, wherein 'the imagination no less than the reason had to be engaged in any adequate representation of the truth; and this meant that the techniques of fiction-making were as necessary to the composition of a historical discourse as erudition might be' (1978: 123–125).

However, as Rankean ideals grew in influence and history took on more scientific methodologies, ‘history, the realistic science par excellence, came to be set over fiction, as the study or representation of the “actual” or the “real” over the “possible” or merely “imaginable,” with historians identifying “truth” with “fact” and regarding fiction as the opposite of truth [and] hence a hindrance to the understanding of reality rather than as a way of apprehending it’ (White 1978: 124).

With this schism, the ‘idea about the duplicitous nature of novelistic reality conveniently dovetail[ed] with the empirical prejudices of history’ (Nelson 2007), compounded by the long literary tradition of ‘false document’ in fiction, in which fictional texts assume the mantle of nonfiction, ostensibly to appear more convincing.

However, while false document has long been a part of fictional discourse, from Cervantes ‘finding’ *Don Quixote*’s (1605) papers in a Cordoba market onwards, Melissa Katsoulis pertinently asks: ‘Why are there so many hoaxes from Australia’ (2010: 10)? From Louis de Rougemont’s fanciful tales of riding wombats in Far North Australia (1899) to Norma Khouri’s fake memoir *Forbidden Love* (2003) — and most famously, the Ern Malley case (1944) — Australian literary history is littered with hoaxes, further undermining fiction’s reliability and ‘trustworthiness.’

Katsoulis makes the ‘telling’ observation that nearly ‘every single one of Australia’s hoaxes involve race’ (2009: 123), whether benignly (such as ‘Nino Culotta’s’ light-hearted *They’re a Weird Mob* [1957]) or more antagonistically (such as Leon Carmen’s spurious motivations for publishing *My Own Sweet Time* [1994]), revealing ‘a young country’s on-going anxiety about its own identity’ in which ‘the subjects of Australia’s settler history and multicultural politics are rarely far from the hoaxer’s mind’ (King 2010). Many hoaxes seem to ‘originate in response to a demand, or are created to fill a perceived gap in culture, and there’s little doubt the advent of multiculturalism coincided with the proliferation of [aforementioned] ethnic and indigenous identity frauds in the arts, especially literature in the 1990s’ (Cateron 2009: 56).

All of these ‘crises’ regarding ‘Koolmatrie’s,’ ‘Demidenko’s,’ Mudrooroo’s, Sykes’ and Weller’s identities and ‘authenticity’ centred on issues closely related to the ones Carter described above, but also issues of creative freedom and imaginative empathy; issues of historical and fictional truth; and grievances over appropriation and attribution.

Moreover, shortly after *The Secret River*'s publication, Howard declared these wars over, saying that 'the divisive, phoney debate about national identity and what it means for our influence in the world has been finally laid to rest,' and calling for 'a structured narrative' of national history rather than 'a fragmented stew of "themes" and "issues"' (2006).

Thus, although Grenville was not guilty of fraud, either explicit (like Carmen) or implicit (like 'Helen D' as David Marr first called her [1995]), sub- and contextually her claims seemed to resort to 'the dubious tool of "imaginative empathy" or concepts such as "fictional truth"' (Nelson 2007). Her claims recalled the formalist, aesthetic defences put forward in those hoaxes while seeming to ignore historians' broader discursive and ideological criticisms.

Grenville's novel was based on unreliable and very contested frontier history, without acknowledging the work of historians such as Pybus, McKenna, Clendinnen (as well as others such as Tom Griffiths, Martin Thomas, W. E. H. Stanner and Bernard Smith). The author was intimately and extensively involved in researching and writing 'passionate, highly readable and moving books that sensitively imagine early relations between black and white' (Falconer 2006). Her suggestion, through images of 'books by historians piled up on [her] desk... quot[ing] document after document' in her exegetic 'writing memoir' *Searching For The Secret River* (2006: 122–123) — that 'the role of historian [was] akin to that of archaeologist's assistant, throwing up pieces of information from the pit for the novelist to catch and work their magic upon' — proved incendiary to those historians who felt that the rise of historical fiction had not only 'accompanied the decline of history in the public domain' (McKenna 2006: 100), but actively *exacerbated* it.

These concerns and complaints cannot have been ameliorated by statements such as Emily Sutherland's and Tony Gibbons' that 'historical fiction completes the work of the historian' (2007); that history's discursive limitations make it possible— and necessary — to fill in the blanks presented by the lack or unreliability of the available evidence, whereby novelists supply the subjective interiority or evocative mimetic atmosphere deemed to be missing from historical representations, offering a 'more complete' picture, somehow 'animating it with the words that turn into the flesh and blood of living, feeling people' (Doctorow 2006). Or as Stella Clarke put it in her enthusiastic review of *Searching...*, 'abandon[ing] a "forensic" approach and

develop[ing] an “experiential” one, moving from letter to person, archive to landscape, fact to fiction, while writing something more “true” than “real” (2006).

Naturally, historians, such as Paula Hamilton, have expressed ‘frustration’ with this ‘deficit model’ of history (quoted in Nelson 2007), in which history often seems more concerned with collective ‘mentalities’ than with individual minds (1990: 789). It’s a ‘familiar problem’ not unrecognised by historians like Clendinnen, who writes of ‘the potential obliteration of human meaning by reduction to numbers. Numbers are essential to establish scale, but we know how easily the actualities of anguish can be masked by a flattened rhetoric and rounded figures... [which] have a powerfully narcotic effect on the imagination’ (1996).

Discursive criticisms of historical fictional narratives centre on *how* the narrative is constructed, arguing that the story (*what* is being recounted in the narrative) and its believability are determined by its discursive form. They assert that because historical narratives are constructed from the available evidence rather than a subjective position, only historiographical methodologies can best address questions of national identity: that the “how” of the representation is an unshakeable responsibility’ (Clendinnen 1996).

However such criticisms ‘do not engage with fiction’s aesthetics... or its affect’ (Nelson 2007), the doubtful no-man’s land between the ‘what’ and ‘how’: *why* fiction, with its acknowledged subjective position and sweeping, unsupported philosophical generalizations, often seems ‘truer’ to readers or seems to offer much more vivid and ‘authentic-feeling’ depictions of past periods, places and people than equivalent texts’ discursively rigorous representations. Nor why, despite the discursive buttressing of footnotes, scholarly citations and archival references to support their theses, history is increasingly being regarded as political, and therefore inherently unreliable.

Clendinnen, who sees fiction and history on ‘opposite sides of a ravine’ (Sullivan 2006) argues (somewhat fictively) against historians seeking ‘to embellish their dried arrangements with the bright flowers of fiction’ (1996). Her argument, however does not, like the Rankean and ‘deficit’ models, take into account developments in both historiography and narratology: historiography having moved beyond simple modernist concepts of ‘absolute truth’ or ‘absolute objectivity’ in the work of critics like White, Roland Barthes, Beverley Southgate or Keith Jenkins. These critics point

to the fallacy of the historian suggesting objectivity by presuming to discursively ‘absent’ themselves from the narrative, as though the facts are ‘speaking for themselves’ without any authorial intervention. This appearance of objectivity, Barthes argues, is ‘a particular form of imaginary projection, the product of what might be called the referential illusion... Today... we know that absences of signs are also in themselves significant’ (1981: 8–11).

And narratology producing hybridised trans- or multi-generic textual forms such as creative nonfiction, literary essays, fictionalised memoir or what Linda Hutcheon and Brian McHale call either ‘self-reflexive historiographical metafiction’ (Hutcheon 1988: 5) or ‘postmodernist revisionist historical novels’ (McHale 1987: 89). Works such as much of Peter Carey’s, Jake Arnott’s or Wu Ming’s oeuvre — as well as newer, ontologically transgressive examples such as Sheila Heti’s *How Should a Person Be?* (2011), Laurent Binet’s *HHhH* (2010) or James Lever’s *Me Cheeta* (2008). In addition to *an allergy*, which does not so much seek to subvert or usurp history (or reality), but problematise the idea of representation and question its textuality (Hutcheon 1988: 15–16).

These adversarial positions also do not take into account historians, like Simon Schama, turning to fictive rhetorical techniques, with McKenna alleging that ‘to cater for the growing market in historical fiction... publishers’ efforts to encourage historians to write for a broader audience have tended to push historical writing towards personal testimony, and ultimately, towards fiction itself’ (2006: 97). As Schama recognises:

Historians [like historical novelists] are left forever chasing shadows, painfully aware of their inability ever to construct a dead world in its completeness however thorough or revealing their documentation [or research] (1991: 319—320).

For Nelson, this reveals how ‘acutely aware Schama is of the distance between lived reality and the attempt to narrate it — between the literary narratives of history and the actualities of the past’ (2007), suggesting all histories are a kind of fiction; especially given the number of distinguished historians writing fiction in the US, UK and Australia. While Ian Mortimer argues ‘Why Historians Should Write Fiction’ (2011), Saul David provocatively asks ‘Are historians best placed to write historical fiction?’ (2010).

However, while examining these debates in a contemporary and Australian context and identifying their most salient and contentious points, ‘rather than concentrating on border disputes’ (James 2009: 15) this thesis is not interested in pursuing issues such as the superiority (moral or otherwise) of one genre or its narratological methodologies over the other; nor entering into debates about what constitutes ‘truth’ or ‘fact’ and how they may be recognized or determined.

Rather, as noted in ‘Questions...’ the exegesis aims to reveal the *similarities* between history and fiction; and how, rather than concentrating on or conflicting about their methodological differences, history and fiction can work not just to complement each other to complete and complement their readers’ knowledge and understanding of the past as of the present.

As Doctorow observes, ‘writers of narrative have a natural affiliation, whatever their calling’ (2006):’ what James calls ‘a shared desire. The desire to both comprehend and apprehend time — somehow to capture memory and clarify the past, a desire that I see as the driving force behind the narrative urge of both the historian and the novelist’ (: 15).

While this superficially conciliatory proposition defuses the contentions and tensions of two competing and antagonistic disciplines jostling over the same territory, it also reveals the paradox of current historiographical and literary approaches to historical fiction. Essentially it implies that because history and fiction share many similarities, it follows that they can be easily compared, which, as the examination above of such flaws in current historiographical and literary critiques of historical fiction has shown, is not the case.

However, if we accept that despite their *essential* narrative similarities, history and fiction are *fundamentally* different in their discursive and rhetorical approaches, then we can decouple the current debate from nebulous and contentious questions of ‘authority,’ ‘authenticity’ or ‘truth’ and examine the ways in which they, as literary texts, operate to convey the impression of believability. We can extend an appraisal of historical fiction and other narrative texts in general beyond the ‘facts’ or ‘rights’ to issues of aesthetic, literary or political values, particularly in relation to questions of personal, subjective and national identity, and how both history and fiction can work to help us not so much understand these questions as find new ways of interrogating them. While ‘these quarrels often deal ostensibly with specific texts,

they unintentionally and unconsciously reveal something more general: a fundamental inadequacy in the way we talk about literature... forc[ing] a radical re-examination of our critical vocabulary.’ However, even if ‘we can’t resolve the differences between the critics... in many ways, those controversies force a radical re-examination of our critical vocabulary’ (Rabinowitz 1977: 121), questions of which this exegesis – and by extension, *an allergy* – hope to explore.

Texts and Secrets

Our first step in addressing flaws and gaps in current discursive critiques of historical fiction is to address them formally and textually. Asserting history’s moral superiority over fiction to represent the past, Clendinnen chooses the word ‘re-present’ to describe her function as a self-appointed ‘clerk of record’ who ‘must witness the records of past actuality’ (1996).

This suggests that historians merely ‘re-present’ the available evidence on record, with minimal intrusion or subjective positioning. But as noted above, this is an imaginary projection, a referential illusion. As Cohn points out, the idea that history is committed to verifiable documentation while fiction is not has ‘survived even the most radical dismantling of the history/fiction distinction’ (1990: 779).

Terms such as ‘truth,’ ‘authority’ and ‘authenticity’ contribute to such antagonistic historiographical critiques. Peter Shillingsburg points out that the question of authority is particularly problematic, not only because it is not cleanly descriptive, its definition ambiguously ‘whatever it is defined to be;’ but because it is nonetheless an emotionally loaded word that grants approval (as reflected by the words ‘authoritative’ or ‘non-authoritative’), brought to any text by whomever reads it’ (1997: 140–141). In such a context, ‘authenticity’ is similarly emotively charged and definitionally ambiguous, especially in relation to questions of ethnic or racial identity in the culture wars’ wake.

The main problem is referentiality. Although history has often been used as a model of the realistic pole of representation (Hutcheon 1988: 15), in which ‘mimesis is the measure of the text,’ no matter how ‘realistic’ a text seems, it cannot represent

the world or ‘provide a window to the world (Nelson 2007)’ because ‘fictional narrative is defined by the fact that its referent is not the world but a particular sub-organisation of the world pulled together under the rubric of the imaginary’ (Davis 1987: 5).

The medieval philosopher Eriugena identified master narrative tropes: ‘mystery’ (historical narrative) and ‘symbol’ (didactic or fictional narrative), given that recollected past events are mysteries because they are ultimately unknowable in any complete sense. They may be partially recovered through narrative which then becomes conflated with the event itself. But as Stephen Nichols points out, ‘all historical narrative is thus allegory, an allegory grounded in event but recounted in words (quoted in Riffaterre 1990: ix).

If the facts are unverifiable (especially in the criminal testimonies to be analysed below), then it might be useful to approach them — and the past or history in general — according to LaCapra’s basic premise: ‘the past is not an ‘it’ in the sense of an objectified entity that may be neutrally represented in and for itself’ (1987: 10).

Riffaterre’s ‘solution’ to these issues lies in redefining referentiality. He argues that while referentiality assumes a relationship between language, narrative and reality, fictional truth — or believability — is not based on an actual experience of reality, nor does any interpretation or critique require that it does. After all, we do not read a novel expecting it to be true. Instead, believability relies on verisimilitude, a verbal system of representations that *seem to reflect* an idea of reality external to the text (rather than that or any other reality) — but only because it conforms to a grammar of representation (or depiction) existing in any language and with which all speakers of that language are familiar (1990: xiii–xiv).

Riffaterre’s central thesis, like Wayne Booth’s (1961), is that believability rests upon *rhetoric* rather than discourse. Accordingly, fiction reveals its ‘truth’ by linguistically declaring its fictionality, employing rhetorical devices such as humour, timelessness, or verbal over-determination (both rhetorically and metaphorically) to generate verisimilitude by repetitive semiosis, rather than representational mimesis. Because verisimilitude is a verbal representation or depiction of reality rather than reality itself, ‘verisimilitude itself entails fictionality,’ relying on the narrative’s sub- and intra-textual grammar and the reader’s linguistic competence (rather than experience) to convey this believability (1990: xiv–xv).

Paradoxically, because fiction's believability is expressed by its declaration of fictionality, 'more can be learned about fiction from those indices that point to narrative truth by seeming to flout it' (Riffaterre 1990: xviii), such as the unreliable and intrusive narration, deliberate anachronism and other discursive transgressions of 'postmodern, post-colonial revisionist historical fiction' which repeat these tropes, saturating the narrative with self-referential or self-reflexive functions that 'excavat[e] greater imaginative and sub-textual space for the reader — and subsequently, a greater impression of and subjective identification with the narrative's "truth"' (1990: xv–xvii).

This non-referentiality parallels Cohn's first signpost of fictionality: cognitive privilege or narrative omniscience. As discussed above, unlike historians, novelists are free not only to depict another person's inner psyche, but to depict the world from their perspective as well. However, in first-person narratives, wherein narrators have direct access to their own thoughts and feelings in both the past and present, Cohn's second signpost, dual vocal origin, applies. If the author is different from the narrator, the text is fictional; if not, it is non-fiction.

Thus, while separating fictional narrative from mimesis (representation of the real) to verisimilitude (the evoked effect of reality) we can 'focus on the textual mechanisms and verbal structures that represent or imply the truth of a fictitious tale' (Riffaterre 1990: xii). First we shall apply Cohn's signposts to establish a text's fictionality, then implement Riffaterre's indices to analyse the ways in which different fictional, nonfictional and historical genres operate rhetorically and sub-textually to evoke or establish believability in their readers. In order of analysis, these texts are:

1. Academic History: *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880* (1990) by Judith Allen, a comprehensive academic survey of sexual crimes by and against women. Specifically, 'Chapter VII: Other Wars: 2 Madams and Razors,' which discusses 'underworld queens' Matilda 'Tilly' Devine and Katherine 'Kate' Leigh in the wider context of prostitution in the period surveyed.
2. Fiction: *The Harp in the South* (1988 [1948]), Ruth Park's social-realist novel, and its depiction of local madam Delie Stock, probably based on an

amalgamation of Tilly and Kate. Specifically, ‘Chapter Four,’ which describes Delie Stock psychologically.

3. Creative Non-Fiction: *Razor* (2009) by Larry Writer, a creative non-fiction account of ‘Razorhurst’ (as interbellum East Sydney and Darlinghurst were branded in popular media at the time²) and Tilly and Kate which has re-popularised interest in them (and was the basis of the fictional television miniseries *Underbelly: Razor* (2011). Specifically, ‘Chapter 31: Hearts of Darkness,’ which offers an imaginative and evocative depiction of Kate.
4. Popular History: *Wild Women of Sydney* (1980) by journalist George Blaikie, and the first comprehensive account of Tilly and Kate (as previous accounts, such as in *Rugged Angel* (1961), Vince Kelly’s biography of Australia’s first policewoman, Lillian Armfield, could not be for fear of libel while they were still alive). Specifically, the pseudonymous ‘Pinto’ Pete’s testimony in ‘Part One: Doctor Jekyll and Mr ‘Pinto’ Hyde,’ which describes his relationship with Tilly. Out of print (with reference to *I Confess* (1936) the memoir of pseudonymous criminal, ‘Crook’ Sweeney, which is the only contemporaneous ostensibly first-person account of criminal practices in interwar East Sydney [although there have been subsequent accounts, most famously *Chow Hayes: Gunman* {1990}). Also out of print).

While there is a wealth of ‘official sources,’ including court transcripts, police gazettes and reports, and newspaper reports and interviews regarding Tilly and Kate (and I use their first names deliberately, as this is how they were popularly known in the press and by the public at the time), and all the selected texts corroborate to some

² ‘Razorhurst, Gunhurst, Bottlehurst, Dopehurst — it used to be Darlinghurst, one of the finest quarters of a rich and beautiful city; today it is a plague spot where the spawn of the gutter grow and fatten on official apathy. By day it shelters in its alleys, in its dens, the Underworld people. At night it looses them to prey on prosperity, decency and virtue, and to fight one another for the division of the spoils... *Truth* demands that Razorhurst be swept off the map, and the Darlinghurst we knew in better days be restored...

Recall the human beasts that, lurking cheek by jowl with decent people, live with no aim, purpose or occupation but crime — bottle men [thieves who bludgeoned their victims, usually from behind, with a bottle], dope pedlars, razor slashers, sneak thieves, confidence men, women of ill repute, pickpockets, burglars, spielers, gunmen and every brand of racecourse parasite. What an army of arrogant and uncontrolled vice’ (‘Clean Up Razorhurst!’, *Truth* 23 September 1928)!

degree these ‘official sources,’ because there are few fictional or historical accounts of this period or people, how can we be sure the later texts, such as *Wild Women of Sydney*, *Razor* or *Sex and Secrets*, all relying on earlier ones like *Rugged Angel*, are based on the ‘facts’ when these ‘facts’ are themselves uncertain, grounded in personal recollection years afterwards, fabricated criminal testimony, or sensational media reports — often manipulated by the subjects themselves?

How do the methodological anomalies in *Razor*’s exhaustively researched yet discursively unorthodox account affect readers’ understanding of or belief in the period or people depicted in comparison to *Sex and Secrets*’s rigorously academic study? And while *The Harp in the South* may be the most obviously fictional text, what to make of the otherwise unidentified and unverifiable ‘Pinto’ Pete’s possibly apocryphal testimony in *Wild Women of Sydney*, in an historical, rather than fictional, context? How will fictional rhetorical analytical models apply to nonfictional texts in this context, in which their discursive differences are juxtaposed as their narrative and topical similarities are explored? And what can they tell us about the interaction of fictional and nonfictional discourses, particularly as juxtaposed together in this analysis and *an allergy*?

Given the fictional emphasis of Cohn’s signposts and Riffaterre’s indices, it stands to reason to first apply their models to the most obviously fictional and historical texts, and subsequently to those texts falling between them, determining how ‘fictional’ and believable these are, particularly in relation to each other.

‘Fictionality’ does not refer to a text’s veracity or mimesis, but how closely it conforms to or how far it deviates from Cohn’s signposts. To avoid confusion over ‘facts’ or ‘truth,’ let us consider these texts’ diageitic elements as ‘data,’ allowing us to examine their discursive or rhetorical believability without reference to mimesis or veracity. This ‘data,’ upon which all of them (mostly) agree, as Ashley Hogan of the Australian Institute of Criminology summarises in her report ‘On the Game: On the Take,’ that:

The most visible occurrence of organised crime... was the ‘razor war’ between underworld queens Tilly Devine and Kate Leigh. Tilly Devine was one of the ‘old’ style brothel owners. She had started off as a street worker and owned her own brothel by the age of 25. Kate Leigh was a symbol of the ‘new’ criminal influence in the sex industry. Although Leigh was arrested and fined

repeatedly for abusive language and vagrancy in her early years in Sydney (charges the police usually used to arrest prostitutes), by the First World War she was involved in the sly-grog 'rackets' (2001: 7).

With the terms recalibrated and data acknowledged, we can now not only determine the selected texts' fictionality, or how they rhetorically and discursively establish believability, but also how they inform or interrogate each other, and how such interrogations reveal our own perceptions of their truth or unreliability.

Academic History: *Sex and Secrets*

Allen's *Sex and Secrets* cannot be mistaken for anything but a conventional academic historiographical account. In addition to her fictional signposts, Cohn offers two signposts of history. In addition to its 'greater concern with collective "mentalities" than with individual minds,' the 'the massive prevalence of summary over scene where external focalisation is maintained over vast temporal stretches in the lives of individuals or nations' (1990: 789).

'Chapter VII: Other Wars: 2 Madams and Razors' digests Tilly and Kate's careers within the context of Allen's wider survey:

While the lives and times of the colourful figures of Sydney's interwar organised crime have been chronicled in various memoirs and accounts,³ there remains considerable scope to analyse existing evidence about organised crime in the context of the history of prostitution and its regulation (169).

Unlike the 'timelessness' that Riffaterre argues defines fiction, *Sex and Secrets* is marked by specific dates, emphasising the text's reference to specific persons and dates, further denoting its nonfictionality:

Tilly Devine arrived in Sydney from Southampton as a war-bride in 1920; 'the first mention of Tilly Devine was in connection with a shooting affray at a south-eastern suburbs party in 1923;' 'in 1925 she walked into a Surry Hills

³ Such as the texts to which it will be compared here, and in some cases, which it cites.

barber shop, slashed the face of a man in a chair with the words “This is from Mary B” (168–170).

Although Tilly’s words are directly quoted, and although their provenance is not explicitly cited, Allen demurs from surmising her motives: ‘Neither the case deposition nor newspaper publicity offers any information as to her motivation’ (170). This reluctance to offer more than the ascertainable facts is exemplified by this passage:

No evidence illuminates the relationship between Tilly Devine and Elsie K. prior to the alleged attempted robbery, but some witnesses’ testimony suggests that Devine came upon the struggle between Elsie K. and the client. Devine was able to tell a plausible story of her belief that Elsie K. was being attacked and she secured acquittal. It may be that as a Sydney-born prostitute whose short career was now on the wane, Elsie K. had offered Devine friendship and useful advice on the local scene (169).

Such conjectural phrases reflect the historian’s inability, more constrained by their discourse’s strictures, to stray beyond the acknowledged facts or evidence. Any account, explanation or representation must be consistent with these facts, avoiding any language or speculation that might distort their research’s integrity or academic rigour.

While Allen’s book generally reflects history’s ‘highly constrained and controlled’ discourse, ‘subject to the author’s justification and the reader’s scrutiny, with its obligatory correspondence to the happenings it narrates overtly displayed in the text itself’ (Cohn 1990: 781), questions arise, particularly as a *result* of this methodology. Why is the relatively innocuous and well-documented fact the then-Commissioner for Police attended Tilly’s funeral in 1966 supported by citation to Alfred McCoy’s extensive study, *Drug Traffic* (1980), yet the summary of her life before then unsupported by any reference or citation? Or Tilly’s words quoted, without any further corroboration (or qualification, such as ‘allegedly’ or ‘reportedly’)? As McKenna notes: ‘We should ask the obvious question: how can we know’ (2006: 105)?

While not doubting the scrupulousness of Allen’s research nor her expertise in this area (given her extensive bibliography and authorship of both women’s entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* [1985]), this selective citation raises such doubts

precisely *because* the reader's disbelief in the text is not suspended *rhetorically* but *discursively*, employing citations to support the narrative and lend referential authority to her assertions and suppositions.

If fiction is not and need not be referential, it must be implied that historiographical texts must be (an implication made stronger by Cohn's addition of referentiality to the analysis of historical texts over fictional ones). Therefore, any absence of citation to supporting evidence can provoke critical doubt in the perceptive (or pedantic) reader: if this detail or that reference are omitted, what else might be?

Fiction: *The Harp in the South*

Contrast Allen's suggestive representations of Tilly and Kate to Ruth Park's indicative depiction of Delie Stock, the 'composite character' from whom Larry Writer acknowledges he 'learned about Tilly, and her great rival Kate Leigh, both, so memorably portrayed' in 'Chapter Four.'

Delie Stock loved and petted her temper. It was like a horse that she caressed and fed and teased when necessary. When it suddenly rose and took control of her, it gave her an exhilaration comparable with that of drink. Now it was well away, in a tossing gallop, upsetting one more restraint each split second. She longed to see shock and disgust come over the red face of this respectable man, and to hate and despise him because it was there.

"I'm as good a woman as anyone else," bawled Delie Stock, sticking the spurs into her temper and giving it slap on the rump for good measure (41–43)...

It cannot be considered anything but fictional, with narratorial omniscience and interior focalisation displayed in the switching between consciousnesses and points of view from Delie Stock to Father Cooley ('this man') and vice-versa; and the narrative's redoubling into direct thought (or 'énoncé,' as Paul Ricoeur calls it [1990: 61]), clearly differentiated between Delie Stock's, Father Cooley's and the narrator's perspectives.

Its fictionality is also obvious by its rich, metaphorical expression which does not refer to any particular time or place outside Delie Stock's consciousness. After all, the 'horse' does not exist, either factually or fictionally, yet within the context of her consciousness, appears to — and appears true, despite her speech betraying an inarticulacy that might not be able to describe her emotions in such terms. This lack of referentiality, says Riffaterre, coupled with the rhetorical saturation of the narrative sequence (1990: xviii), makes fiction 'ring true.'

The chapter's satirical tone exposes both priest and prostitute's mutual misunderstanding and hypocrisy over a donation; its humorous denouement (Delie Stock's declaration "I won [the money] in the lottery" resulting in its acceptance); use of vernacular ("that money weren't earned the way you think... just stick yer beak in the newspaper and read me name"); and their hysterical interiorised perspectives ('She sniffled, and a lone sticky tear rolled down her withered cheek. It wasn't fair. It wasn't fair') further displace and distort the narrative's verisimilitude, paradoxically 'assuming a pre-existence that turns into a presupposition of objective reality' (1990: 41). It may be a fictional depiction of fictional characters and their imaginary emotions, but 'Chapter Four' sure is believable.

Creative Non-Fiction: *Razor*

Even without Cohn and Riffaterre's models to guide us, it is easy to distinguish between obviously historical or fictional texts. But what happens when a text employs both fictional rhetoric *and* historiographical methodology? With Writer's claim that 'armed with the recollections of those who lived in Surry Hills in the 1940s, it is not impossible to *imagine* Kate Leigh in her domain in those years' (Writer 2001: 248), *Razor* tests straightforward definition and asks problematic questions: does the employment of either imaginative fictional rhetoric and referential historiographical discourse or both in the same text make it more believable, or merely methodologically dubious? Does it become more illuminating or just more misleading?

Razor employs many of Riffaterre's fictional tropes, particularly in 'Chapter 31: Hearts of Darkness,' with a verisimilarly depicted and speculatively imagined scene full of directly quoted and humorous vernacular without citation, reference or context:

At Devonshire Street she would turn left and plod into Crown, and as she passed the shop fronts and pubs, people would typically call to her, "Hey, Kate" or "Katie, what do you know?" If the caller was a friend, she'd laugh and respond, "'Ow yer goin', love? Awright?" But if it was an enemy, or one of the neighbourhood urchins who delighted in teasing her at that stage of her life, she may have glowered and drawled, "Sling yer hook," "Shut yer pan" or "Cut out the cheek, Sonny Jim, or I'll bloody-well pull yer tripe out and feed it to the cat," or perhaps, when feeling uninspired, a simple, somewhat plaintive, "Awww, fuck off, why doncha?" (248)

Rhetorical devices, such as attenuated syntax and the heavy employment of present participles acting as descriptors *and* markers of continuous or eternal time saturate the narrative, endowing it with the verisimilar description and timelessness that give fictional narrative 'the authority of the real' (Riffaterre 1990: xviii). It also reflects the 'dark areas' described by Benjamin Hrushovski (1984: 248) in which temporal references are left 'floating;' we are given the time at which Kate's walk supposedly transpired ('late afternoon,' or 'if it was past 6 p.m., pub closing time'), but not the exact date; the decade ('the 1940s') but not the exact year, and so on. This, says Hrushovski, is a mark of fictionality' (1984: 248).

Yet despite the text's historiographical discursive discrepancies, 'Hearts of Darkness' rings *fictionally* true:

The cacophony of cawing crows; clattering billy carts careening down hills and the shrill cries of the urchins who rode them; the distant 'choof-choof-choofing' of steam trains at Central; drinkers bawling 'The Rose of Tralee' and 'If You Knew Susie' in pubs and the tinkle of 'Chopsticks' on a home piano; a paperboy spruiking *Truth's* latest scandal; the snapping of breeze-blown nappies hung on string clotheslines; or the profane din of dunny-cart men hefting the evil black buckets on their heads — 'as flat as a shit-carter's hat' went the old saying (249).

This fictionality is further emphasised by referring to fiction: 'In her 1949 novel *Poor Man's Orange*, Ruth Park would describe in horrifying detail a rat attacking a

baby in a Surry Hills terrace and the baby's mother beating the squealing rodent to death. Such incidents were not uncommon in the Hills' (250).

While traditional historiographical methodologies and critiques may question Writer's reference to fiction for an understanding of historical places, periods or people, it should be noted that Park's novels, like Kylie Tennant's novels *Fouveaux* (1946) or *The Joyful Condemned* (1953), were not written as historical novels, but as contemporary (or near contemporary) social-realist novels: in effect a journalistic *reporting* 'offering a record of the living conditions of [East Sydney's] poor through the first third of the Twentieth Century,' based on extensive research and personal experience, notes Tennant's biographer, Jane Grant. Even McKenna used quotations from fiction and poetry in his work, 'because they expressed, more succinctly and more powerfully, historical insights similar to my own, sometimes they even pointed the way' (2006: 108).

The veracity of these contemporary social-realist novels (despite their obvious subjectivity) reflect McHale's observation that 'few historical novels [and by extension, historical texts] succeed in projecting the intellectual culture or ideology of a past period — its ethos, thought-styles, attitudes and tastes — without anachronism (instead, rather, reflecting the ethos, thought-styles, attitudes and tastes of the period in which it was written, and the author who wrote it)' (1987: 88). This is something which contemporaneous or near-contemporaneous social-realist novels *can* do, and which may explain Sutherland and Gibbons's avowal that 'fiction [can] complete and complement readers' knowledge and understanding of the past (Sutherland and Gibbons 2009). Such contemporaneous fiction was invaluable for insights into vernacular, dress, music and other mimetic data I could incorporate into *an allergy*, especially *History* and *His Story*, both set in the 1930s.

While this is valid for social-realist fiction (according to Franzen and Lawson), it is not necessarily applicable to historical fiction — or even history. No matter how much research we do, we are unlikely to actually believe what people of that time believed' (Rabinowitz 1977: 130). While historians like Clendinnen acknowledge the limitations of knowing the past: 'We must also admit, to ourselves and to our readers, that much of what we most want to know, like the secret pulses of our subjects' affective lives, we cannot know. Or probably cannot know' (1996), unless novelists also profess to be mind-readers then, in historical fiction featuring actual historical

figures, neither can they: like Tolstoy, they can only *imagine*.⁴ As there has not yet been a contemporary historical novel published about these people, period or place for Writer to refer, this is moot in *Razor*'s case (although McHale and Rabinowitz may yet be proven right in the event of *an allergy*'s publication).

But despite its deviations from orthodox historiographical methodology, *Razor* reveals its fundamentally historiographical discourse. The text is not written in fiction's past-indicative tense, but couched in history's conditional or past-habitual tense, similar to Allen's suggestive inferences:

If Kate was in a hurry, she would take a short cut to Lansdowne Street through any of the myriad alleyways of the area, and if it was a typical Surry Hills lane circa 1940s, it would have been wee-the-bed and ragwort speckled. The heavy trudge of her sensible shoes would have sent packs of hissing, mewing cats skittering for cover. The strays, until disturbed, may have been routing a nest of the brown, razor-toothed, puppy-sized rats that, attracted to the raw sewage and refuse strewn about, infested Surry Hills (250).

Unlike Park's past-indicative, cognitively privileged interior focalisation of Delie Stock's consciousness, Writer does not attempt to enter Kate's mind or articulate her thoughts on that apparently fictional walk home. Despite his confession that 'when in a few instances I have been unable to locate irrefutable, definitive proof of an event or conversation, I have taken the liberty of arriving at a version that seems most likely, using as a touchstone the wealth of information at my disposal' (xiv), such speculations are supported by a bibliography of sources. These include individuals 'such as neighbourhood child Bernie Purcell;' former Darlinghurst police officers; and a former *Daily Mirror* crime journalist, who all knew Kate as adversaries, bystanders or friends' (251-257), even if their memories were naturally dimmed by the passage of time or mutated by the interference of other perspectives in contemporaneous media (by reports such as the *Truth* article quoted above), local folklore or books such as *Rugged Angel* or *Wild Women of Sydney*.

⁴ 'Since the "official" historical record cannot report on what went on inside a historical figure without fictionalizing to some extent, the novelist is free to introspect his historical characters, even to invent interior monologues for them; the classic example, of course, is Tolstoy's Napoleon in *War and Peace* (1869) (McHale 1987: 87).

Nonetheless, *Razor* occupies an intriguing position on the borderline between imaginative fictional rhetoric and referential historiographical discourse, revealing the fluidity between these borders and shifting generic definitions.

Equally intriguingly, this both contributes to and problematises its believability: while its employment of fictional rhetoric evokes sub-textual ‘truth’ and immediacy, this straying from the strict confines of historiographical discourse leaves it open to charges of ‘going beyond the established evidence or facts and presenting imaginative speculation as historical fact’ (Clendinnen 1996). And while its adherence to some historiographical methodologies, such as verification and inference might lend it discursive credibility, its imaginative speculation and lack of citation undermine its scholarly authority.

Popular History: *Wild Women of Sydney*

Which is what makes *Wild Women of Sydney* (cited in *Razor* and *Sex and Secrets*), and especially ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr “Pinto” Hyde’ (19–25) especially problematic. A popular history written for a wide and non-academic audience, it pays even less attention to historiographical methodology, offering no index, bibliography, sources, citations or references; presenting Tilly and Kate in a novelistic fashion with heavy narrative gloss with humour and subjective opinion; direct, vernacular language; and unsubstantiated speculation:

While little is known about the early years of the fabulous Tilly Devine, it is a safe bet that she did not win many prizes at Sunday school... she never showed any obvious sign of being interested in treading the paths of righteousness;

or

Big Jim was a teller of tall tales, and legend has it that he conned [Tilly’s parents] with a claim he owned a big kangaroo farm back home in Australia (83).

Although, if fictional, such a narrative would be pretty conventional, in an historiographical context, it becomes discursively contentious. How does Blaikie

know Tilly never showed any such signs? Or ‘legend has it’ Big Jim conned Tilly’s parents? While Allen may have only deduced as far as the referential documentation allowed or Writer may have taken the liberty of only arriving at a version that seemed most likely from the available evidence, Blaikie’s strident claim seems doubtful, given that it occurred in London, all parties involved (Tilly, Big Jim, her parents) were all long dead at the time of writing, and there is no other reference by any other witness or party to this ‘legend’ in any verifiable source. This doubt is exacerbated by Blaikie’s subsequent concession that ‘the legend is probably not true’ (83). This fictionality is further evoked by Blaikie’s sensational promise of ‘facts about the ladies, so intimate that they could have only come from someone who lived with them, worked with them, and got into bed with them to learn their pillow secrets’ (15).

Blaikie presents ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr “Pinto” Hyde’ as ‘the confessions and revelations of a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde personality, a now wealthy and dignified citizen who as a young man led a double life between 1932 and 1940’ (19), purporting that:

I received a letter from a man who said he had once known [Tilly and Kate] well and if I cared to call he would give me some useful material... before the day was out, I was to learn that in his youth this distinguished-looking gentleman had been a full member of the Darlington Push, Tilly Devine’s special counsellor and major-domo, and lover’ (1980: 19–20)...

It could be said that, protective of his sources and mindful of legal ramifications, like Allen’s effacement of Elsie K.’s identity, Blaikie pseudonymises ‘Pinto.’ However, with no other verifiable or corroboratory data in any other source (including no further mention of Tilly’s ‘special counsellor and major-domo’ by Blaikie or other sources, even in the ostensibly historical remainder of *Wild Women*); it is possible to surmise, as some historians such as Nerida Campbell have, that ‘Pinto’ may have been either a composite of different identities or incidents drawn together as a frame story for narrative cohesion, or else a complete fabrication (Campbell: 2008).

Although such theorists as Barthes, Collingwood, White (E.B. and Hayden) or Searle might argue that ‘there is no textual property, syntactic or semantic, that will identify a text as a work of fiction’ (Searle 1975: 325), Cohn disagrees:

What 'serious' (or historiographical) discourse ever quoted the thoughts of a person other than the speaker's own? Even if the genre-tagged cover page of a novel [say, *The Harp in the South*] were removed, we would know from the first sentence that this scene tells of a fictional character known to his narrator as no real person can be known to a real speaker (1990: 784–785).

This is complicated by the narrative's redoubled vernacular tone which makes it difficult to determine who is speaking: 'Tilly wanted oysters. How many? She'd tell him when to stop. Tartly, she said that she'd pay later' (73); or the past-indicative, interior focalisation of 'Pinto' (echoing Delie Stock's 'horse'): 'Chains seemed to drop away from him and he felt free for the first time in years' (77). Is it Tilly speaking? Or 'Pinto's' version of what she said? Or Blaikie's version of 'Pinto's' version? Or just Blaikie?

Blaikie's repeated proclamations of honesty and admissions of doubt that are reminiscent of the protestations of a 'postmodernist revisionist historical novel's' unreliable narrator, make 'Pinto' conceivably appear fictional, just like Herbert Badgery, the picaresque narrator of Peter Carey's novel *Illywhacker* (1985),⁵ who proclaims on the first page: 'I am a terrible liar and I have always been a liar. I say that early to set things straight' (3).

Seeking to avoid an 'unproveable negative,' Cohn 'resists declaring' that 'no fictional narrative has ever been (or ever could be) written that adhered to the historical mode from beginning to end. If an author imposed this role on the narrator of a historically realistic novel, the result would be a generic anomaly; for unless it announced its fictional status para- or peri-textually, nothing would prevent such a work from passing for a historiographic[al] text' (1990: 788).

By not declaring its fictionality, 'Dr Jekyll and Mr "Pinto" Hyde' could be considered, in conjunction with *Wild Women* as a whole, as generically anomalous. Unlike *Razor's* acknowledged imaginative speculation, the possibly fictitious 'Pinto' and his fabricated testimony are presented as historical 'fact' (albeit rendered unreliable by personal opinion's subjectivity and personal recollection's uncertainty). Yet while it is initially difficult to determine whether the text is fictional or historical

⁵ *Illywhacker's* title itself referring to a confidence trickster or carnival talker, or spieler (Dalzell, Victor et al 2008: 353)

or an amalgam of both, the fictional analytical tools provided by Cohn and Riffaterre allow a more certain verdict.

If ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr “Pinto” Hyde’ is read as a ‘documentary historical novel’ (Turner 1979: 337), in the ‘Scott tradition’ (McHale 1987: 87)⁶ featuring actual historical figures like Tilly and Kate, when the form comes closest to academic history, its manner nonetheless becomes unmistakably and distinctively fictional. But Cohn argues that ‘marked by their distinctive discursive modes, historical fiction and history are different in kind, not merely in degree’ (1990: 788).

Regardless of its actuality or fictionality, historical fiction, like history itself — like any text — needs to be plausible to be believable. As McHale notes (recalling Hrushovski), it ‘often strives to give the illusion that a historical figure can walk out of a real cafe and show up in a fictional house. When such migrations occur, an ontological boundary between the real and the fictional has been transgressed. “Classic” historical fiction tries to make this transgression as nearly unnoticeable as possible, camouflaging the seam between historical reality and fiction in ways described above: by introducing pure fiction only in the “dark areas of the historical record; by avoiding anachronism; by matching the “inner structure” of its fictional worlds to the real world’ (1987: 90). By this criteria, no matter how ontologically fraught or transgressive, ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr “Pinto” Hyde,’ with rich verisimilar detail and amusingly persuasive narrative voice, is engagingly believable.

However, given that it is presented within an ostensibly historical text, presented as personal testimony or historical fact, any discursive deviation — both methodologically and especially *rhetorically* — ‘potentially forfeits the entire value or believability of the work when the reader begins to nurture the seed of doubt’ (Sweeney 1936: viii).

As ‘Crook’ Sweeney, the equally pseudonymous (and equally possibly fabricated) author of the mysterious *I Confess* (‘in collaboration with an anonymous professional journalist’) acknowledges, ‘the criminal life, whilst admittedly repulsive, is so rich in colourful adventure [and] so fraught with peril as to appease even the most flighty

⁶ In which ‘the inner world of historical figures [i]s inaccessible — inadmissible realemes (or semiotised objects in a novel’s symbolic grammar, according to Itamar Even-Zohar (1990: 210) — and therefore present them externally only, reserving the presentation of inner life for their wholly fictional characters’ as opposed to the “Tolstoyan example” (McHale 1987: 87).

imagination, even to the point where the fictitious element offends, rather than satisfies, the mind... demonstrat[ing] the thinness of the line which separates the possibility of truth from the improbability of fiction in this class of writing...' (1936: v-vi).

If fiction is not dependent on reference to the real world or external realities but rhetorical and linguistic grammar to convey its perceived truth, whether 'Pinto' is real or not is irrelevant in determining his testimony's believability, which, as determined above, is not only fictional according to Cohn's signposts but fictionally *believable*, according to many of Riffaterre's indices.

But in an historical context, which *is* reliant on reference — both narratively and discursively — this begs the question: how then to regard 'Pinto's' testimony? As Pollack asks:

Once we start to wonder if the narratives are true, we can't help but ask why the author would try to trick us. 'Well,' we might respond, 'if an author wants to write about the repressed suffering of exiles whose histories and memories have been nearly obliterated by forces outside their control, he might be obliged to imagine their hidden lives and present his imaginings as true' (2003).

'Pinto,' a 'distinguished gentleman' whose home is 'a scene of pure affluence' (Blaikie 1980: 19), is endowed with such an apparently accurate memory, he can recall 'facts... so intimate' such as what Tilly was wearing on an occasion, exactly what she said, or other 'pillow secrets'; he is hardly 'an exile with repressed suffering whose memories have been obliterated.' So do we dismiss 'Pinto's' testimony because it might be a tissue of lies? Or do we examine it for the way it can inform us about the kernel of truth it may contain or how it might further illuminate the meagre record, especially about a period and people, often driven to crime by socio-economic circumstance and marginalised in wretched slum conditions, described by contemporaneous media as 'human beasts,' 'parasites,' 'an army of arrogant and uncontrolled vice,' and 'every form of life that is vile' (*Truth* 1928: 5)?

More importantly, what does it tell us about the way we read fictional and non-fictional texts, given that, even without employing Cohn and Riffaterre's models, a fictional text like *The Harp in the South* can be so believable that historians like Writer refer to it; yet an historical text like *Sex and Secrets* can reveal slippages of

doubt? These are questions not only explored in the chapters to follow, but in *an allergy*, especially in their juxtaposition with each other.

Ritual Transactions and Contractual Obligations

While such analysis can tell us what rhetorical or narrative devices texts employ to establish believability, they cannot, like the texts themselves, do so alone. If a text's believability does not rest on referentiality, it could be argued that it instead relies on *intention* and *reception*. As many critics remind us, any text-based analysis implicitly involves and acknowledges the reader, upon whose responses and complicity the text's believability depends. Indeed, the entire point of Riffaterre's thesis is to explain the actualisation of narratological structures and how they produce concrete forms, 'without which there could be no reader response' (1990: xiii). As Cohn notes, 'the mutual interdependence of textual strategies and the production of meaning has become increasingly clear' (1990: 776).

After all, verisimilitude can only depict a reality perceived by readers, and, since perceptions of reality change with time, history and society, a text's verisimilitude is 'less a quality inherent in the text itself than a fluctuating value dependent upon the beliefs of the particular people (or culture) who read it at that particular time' (Rabinowitz 1977: 132), just as judgments of its literariness or canonical status can also change with time, perception and socio-historical context (Eagleton 1996: 9–11).

And if writing is a performance, then so too is reading, 'in which the reader's participation can only hammer the text's plausibility into their experience' (Riffaterre 1990: xiv) in what W. Ross Winterrowd 'a special interpretative contract... between writer and reader in which the borders between fact and fiction are sharply drawn' (1990: 16). This relationship is reciprocatively *co-operative*, despite acknowledging the ways which writers, unintentionally and intentionally, breach it, making it *co-optive*' (1990: 32).

Rabinowitz's audience-based model builds on Gibson's 'mock reader' (1950: 266) and Ong's 'fictionalised audience' (1975:11), noting that both have recognized that

‘the act of reading demands a certain pretence’ (1977: 124), without which, no text could be read, much less understood or believed.

However, Rabinowitz expresses dissatisfaction with their ‘two-sided models’ saying they ‘are far too simple to account for the complexity of literary experience’ showing ‘[in]sufficient concern with the distinction between fictional and nonfictional modes of address, or with the related distinction between speaker (or narrator) and implied author. Both critics treat autobiography and novel in much the same way’ (1977: 124–127) — a point intrinsic to the following discussion of false document, fake memoir and literary hoax.

Rabinowitz postulates that there are four audiences in any literary narrative text — ‘the actual,’ ‘the hypothetical,’ ‘the narrative’ and ‘authorial’ audiences (1977: 126–130), which readers must join to read, understand and believe a text. While he acknowledges his model ‘does not work equally well for all novels, but it works for most, and is particularly useful in clarifying the difficulties encountered in texts with involved narrative structures’ such as ‘more complex works like novels-within-novels, novels with frames, epistolary novels, novels addressed to internal characters, novels with multiple narrators [and] certain ironic novels’ (1977: 123) such as *an allergy*, offering further opportunities to determine how best to establish believability in and across such a wide range of intra-textual genres.

His model also makes, *mutatis mutandis*, a relatively neat analytical fit with Davis’s ‘defences’ audiences enact to become such an audience. These defences — isolation, projection, identification and denial — are ‘the nodal points by which humans make contact with reality and buffer that reality (Davis 1987: 11).

Davis draws heavily on Lasch’s theories, particularly his book, *The Minimal Self* (1984), in which Lasch describes how the self has become so diminished by mass production, consumerism and media it has become regressively narcissistic, which he argues, should not be confused with egoism or selfishness, but rather, an inclination to see the world as a mirror or projection of its own fears and desires, making individuals weak and dependent on the ‘fantastic, ideologically-motivated, mass-produced images that shape their perceptions of the world.’ This dependence not only encourages a defensive contraction of the self, but a dissolution of the boundaries between the self and its surroundings’ (1984: 19; 33).

The novel, as the first powerful, broad, and hegemonic literary form ‘served to blur the distinction between illusion and reality, between fact and fiction, between symbol and what is represented’ (Davis 1987: 3). It *encouraged* the collapse of the boundary between individuals’ inner consciousnesses and the outer world, between fantasy and fact, between symbolisation and representation making the reader unable to distinguish between the inner and outer, self and other, fact and fiction (Lasch 1984: 19; 244), resulting in an even greater assumption of fictional and ‘rival fictive historical’ truth.

Not only this, but such narcissistic dependence has allowed the commodification of identity and authenticity, leading to the identity frauds and fake memoirs that proliferated at the height of the history– and culture wars —the controversies which would later contribute to historiographical criticism of *The Secret River*, and historical fiction in general.

Discursively, Lasch and Rabinowitz have a point, even if, most critics and readers in this wised-up, ironically-aware, postmodern, mass-culture, mash-up world would — and the burgeoning of such fake memoirs in recent years — attest, ‘memoir is a strange kind of performance. It’s halfway between fiction and testimony. Anybody in his right mind knows that a memoir is unreliable’ (McHale, quoted in Dotinga 2006).

Yet how ironic, then, that the search for ‘authenticity’ and ‘reality’ should rest on a source as subjective, unreliable, strangely performative and possibly fictive as memoir, even without the additional problem of fraud or hoax! But as Caterson, Ruthven, Takolander and others argue, it is precisely this need for ‘authenticity’ and valorisation of voice or identity over text that allows such hoaxes to occur. As Sophie Masson observes, ‘there’s the rub. A novel, by its very nature, flags straightaway it’s a combination of “reality” and imagination; a work of “nonfiction” proudly proclaims itself to be authentic’ (2004: 11).

But a generically anomalous text like ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr “Pinto” Hyde’ — which may very well be a combination of ‘reality’ and imagination, yet proudly (if unreliably) proclaims itself to be authentic — makes it an excellent text against which to test Riffaterre, Davis and Rabinowitz’s reader-oriented models to examine what defences and pretences readers enact to read, understand and believe a text, especially one which may not be what it says it is.

Audiences and Defences

To read, understand and believe any text, the actual audience (the real people who read the book, over whom and whose response the writer has no control) must adopt Davis's different defences to join or enact the other audiences, especially the authorial (a hypothetical audience about whom the writer makes certain rhetorical assumptions — such as their beliefs, knowledge or taste — without which he cannot write) and narrative (whom the narrator addresses, which actual readers must pretend to be to successfully read and believe the text). As he says, 'in order to read, we have to ascribe a certain validity to what we read. If we were truly sceptical, we would be saying "This is false, this is a lie," and we would ultimately be unable to read a novel' (1987: 20). Or *any* text, including historical ones.

Actual readers simultaneously join the authorial and narrative audiences by isolating themselves (concentrating on the text by excluding the external world). However, even if an author makes a serious attempt to write for 'real people,' the distance between the actual and the authorial audiences will always exist, and this gap must be bridged by readers who wish to appreciate the book. The greater the distance — geographical, cultural, chronological (and, I would add, ideological or discursive) — the more of a challenge this is likely to provide (Rabinowitz 1977: 127). But the closer it is, and the closer it conforms to readers' linguistic perception of reality or plausibility, the more believable the text will be.

While reading Park's novel, for example, contemporaneous readers would have simultaneously treated it 'true' and 'untrue,' a condition necessary for the proper reading of a novel (Rabinowitz 1977: 125) — or, it might be argued, *any* text, given we do not automatically assume in reading an historical text that the author is accurate or truthful. Of course, there are unreliable narrators, especially in fiction, but 'all fictional narrators are false in that they are imitations; some are imitations of people who tell the truth, some of people who lie' (Rabinowitz 1977: 133–34).

These fictional narrators are generally imitations of actual authors, writing for an imitation audience, the narrative audience, which also possesses a particular knowledge: successful readers must not only join the authorial audience but 'at the same time must *pretend* to be a member of the imaginary audience the narrator is

addressing' (1977: 127) or 'narratee,' (Prince 2003: 57).⁷ This condition is enabled by Davis's second defence, projection, in which we 'project our own feelings and thoughts into characters, attribut[ing] to them a range of feelings, actions [and knowledge] we might never allow [or know] ourselves' (1987: 20). Not only those *in* the text, such as 'Pinto' or Delie Stock to whom and whose feelings we identify, but those — the narratees — *to whom* the novel is addressed.

As Rabinowitz summarises it, 'one way to determine the characteristics of the narrative audience is to ask, "What sort of person would I have to pretend to be — what would I have to know and believe — if I wanted to take this work of fiction as real?"' (1977: 128). This reflects isolation's second characteristic: isolating ideas and affects and saying 'These are not part of my emotional or cognitive being. They are simply part of what is *in* this book' (Davis 1987: 20).

If the actual audience is real, and the authorial audience hypothetical, the narrative audience is entirely fictional. In a novel like *Harp* 'the author not only knows that the narrative audience is different from the actual and authorial audiences, but they rejoice in this fact and expect their actual audience to rejoice with them. For it is this difference which makes fiction fiction, and the double-levelled aesthetic experience possible' (Rabinowitz 1977: 130).

But while most of the ironic joy of reading comes from the distinctions between these different audiences and the tensions among them, and when, at the extreme end of realism, the authorial and narrative audiences are so close as to be indistinguishable that all irony is lost and the distinction disappears entirely, we have autobiography or history (Rabinowitz 1977: 131–135). This does not account for texts like 'Dr Jekyll and Mr "Pinto" Hyde,' which purport to be history even as they read like fiction.

If the distance between the authorial and narrative audiences is along an axis of 'fact' (or, more accurately, 'knowledge' or 'plausibility') then the distance between

⁷ While Prince notes that the narratee, a purely textual construct, can sometimes be represented as a character, more often they are not, and must be distinguished from what he calls the "implied reader," a concept similar to Rabinowitz's authorial audience (Prince 2003: 57). However, as Rabinowitz argues, while the narratee 'is someone perceived by the reader as a separate person "out there" who serves as a mediator between narrator and reader, the narrative audience, in contrast, is a role which the text forces the reader to take on,' a reader- (rather than text-) centred analysis Rabinowitz believes 'more successfully explains why certain texts evoke certain responses' (1977: 127).

the narrative and ideal narrative audiences is along one of ethics or interpretation. While the narrative audience is expected to judge the narrator, the ideal narrative audience agrees with his viewpoint and the way he tells the story (Rabinowitz 1977: 135). For example, the ideal narrative audiences of both *Harp* and *Wild Women* projects unacceptable emotions or behaviours onto Tilly, Kate and Delie Stock, accepting that despite their criminality and violence, they ‘made their livings as best they could... and were not to be judged by the standards of more privileged people’ (Blaikie 1980: 78).⁸

This projection is further reinforced by identification, in which we ‘place ourselves in some special relation to the hero or heroine, or in the case of anti-heroes of the twentieth century (such as Delie Stock, Tilly, Kate or ‘Pinto’), with the author or some ideal reader’ (Davis 1987: 21), whether ‘feeling’ what Delie Stock feels, or ‘barracking’ for her, Tilly, Kate and ‘Pinto’s’ schemes and criminal activities.

Despite the evidence implying ‘Pinto’ is as fictional as his testimony, the ideal narrative audience may wish to believe that Blaikie is *essentially* telling the truth, and that Pinto really did exist — and besides, what does it matter if either of them ‘fudges’ the facts to make the story truer?

After all, journalists protect or disguise sources all the time, and often amalgamate or disguise sources to protect their privacy or for narrative cohesion.⁹ However creative nonfiction writers like Writer often include an author’s note explaining such name changes, characters amalgamated or people and events omitted, usually with the proviso that such amendments have only occurred where they had no impact on the

⁸ While *The Harp in the South* is now considered a classic of Australian literature, the awarding of 1946 *Sydney Morning Herald* Novel Competition to “Mrs D’Arcy Niland’s” novel resulted in outrage, with many letters to the editor expressing ‘disgust’ that such ‘a gross exaggeration of the housing conditions in Sydney’s slum areas and of the illiteracy, ignorance and drunken and dirty habits of the Irish dwellers therein.’ ‘It must bring Sydney and many of its citizens into ridicule and contempt,’ thundered William Steel of Sydney; with one correspondent, Robert Campbell of Surry Hills, swearing that it bore no resemblance to Surry Hills or to any Irish people he knew (*The Sydney Morning Herald, Readers’ Opinions*, 11 January 1947: 2).

⁹ Here, I must confess my part in such a ruse: having been interviewed by Helen Garner for *Joe Cinque’s Consolation* (2004), I asked my identity to be disguised, given that, at least in Sydney’s small Indian community, there are and possibly will always be more doctors than writers, and had I given my occupation, I may as well have admitted my name, which for various reasons, I did not wish to do. Nonetheless, what Garner reported my alter-ego said to her regarding the case was exactly the same as I remember saying to her. Does the assumption of a false identity change the words or the truth they — via the text — convey?

veracity or substance of the story (although it is interesting that many academic histories such as *Sex and Secrets* do not make similar admissions about any omissions they might make). Blaikie makes no such admissions either, other than to disguise ‘Pinto’s’ real identity, despite claiming that his nickname in both the ‘squarehead’ and criminal worlds was ‘Pinto Pete’ (1980: 19).

By contrast, even if the imaginatively descriptive passages in *Razor* employ many fictional rhetorical devices, Writer is scrupulous to stay on the data’s verifiable side. Although such imaginatively evocative speculation is transgressive in a strictly historiographical discourse, it is permissible within creative nonfiction’s discursive parameters. As Winterowd points out, ‘under this condition, the obviously fictional elements in the text — such as invented dialogue or interior focalisation — are taken as authorial interpretations, legitimate hypotheses about reality, not as fictions’ (1990: 32). At the moment Writer *depicts*, rather than *represents* Kate, the depiction, stripped of referentiality (as there is no data to refer to, other than Writer’s own imagination) becomes *fictive*, if not strictly or necessarily *fictional*: that is, while it may *resemble* fictional narrative or rhetoric, it is *not*, because of the factual and methodological limitations described above.

Given this, one might choose to believe not just *Wild Women*’s possibly factual sections but its potentially fictional section as well, given how unreliable much supposedly primary evidence, especially the very undocumented, unreliable testamentary evidence of criminal history, can be. As Margaret Atwood discovered, while researching *Alias Grace* (1996):

The past is made of paper... what’s on the paper? Records, documents, newspaper stories, eyewitness reports, gossip and rumour and opinion and contradiction. There is no more reason to trust something written down on paper than there is now. After all, the writers-down were human beings, and are subject to error, intentional or not, and their own biases... if you’re after the truth, the whole and detailed truth, and nothing but the truth, you’re going to have a thin time of it if you trust paper; but, with the past, it’s almost all you’ve got (1998: 1513–1514).

This is (for want of a better expression) doubly true considering the paltry swag left after everything that might have been left out. Given all that ‘truer’ ‘suppressed truth,’ Blaikie’s narrative and ideal narrative audiences might — despite the distances (or because of the overlap) between fact and fiction, interpretation and imagination —

deny the evidence (or lack of it) implying 'Pinto's' and his testimony's fictionality and assume it to be *essentially* true. Or true *enough*. Denial is not merely a refusal to accept 'an unpleasant or unwanted piece of external reality either by means of wish-fulfilling fantasy' (Davis 1987: 21) but a dependent, narcissistic self, unable to distinguish between fact and fiction, doing what every reader does when they read any novel: suspending their disbelief.

False Document

False document, first coined by Kenneth Rexroth (1968: 164), has always existed in fiction: Daniel Defoe 'edits' *Robinson Crusoe's* journals (1719); Joseph Furphy passes on 'Tom Collins's'¹⁰ diaries to *The Bulletin* which serialises them as *Such is Life* (1903); and journalist George Blaikie 'receive[s] a letter from a man who said he had once known [Tilly and Kate] well and if I cared to call and have lunch with him he would give me some useful material' (1980: 19).

As Craig Cravens notes, 'in the 18th Century... the convention of the manuscript found in a desk drawer or the discovered diary were attempts not so much to persuade readers of a work's authenticity, but to urge readers to approach them with the same seriousness as a nonfictional piece of writing' (2000: 78). In the case of early false documentary novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* or *Pamela*, this holds true. But if, as the title of Ruthven's polemic *Faking Literature* (2001) illustrates his belief that literature can not only be faked but is itself a kind of fake, what makes such a fake a genuine work of art, as opposed to a counterfeit?

Pollack offers three hallmarks of false document to distinguish it from forgery or hoax (2003): a demand the reader keep checking back and forth between the illusion

¹⁰ Tom Collins, also the name of the classic cocktail, was the result of the so-called "Great Tom Collins Hoax of 1874," in which a person would approach an acquaintance and ask, 'Have you seen Tom Collins?' then tell them that said Collins had libelled them, and regale them with the details. When the victim set off to find Collins, they would then say Collins had departed by a long and complicated route to a faraway place. It became a popular prank leading to the phrase 'Have you seen Tom Collins?' becoming popular slang and synonymous with a tall story, with the famed bartender Professor Jerry Thomas creating a drink in its honour in 1876. Furphy's readers would have been very aware of the connotations, and of the joke.

and the real; attribution, in which the author is clearly differentiated from the subject or document; and intention, whether the artist intends the text to be considered or believed to be real. But equally, they also involve the participation and reception of readers, enacting the defences described by Davis, to be believable. The last two distinctions are especially relevant to discussions of fraud, forgery or hoax.

Although, as Davis observes, ‘one could argue that an unmediated view of the world is impossible, so what difference would it make if we get that view from the novel or the newspaper or hearsay?’ as established above, it is *precisely* that difference between different discursive forms that carries different forms of meaning, and the effect — whether authenticity or authority — of the statements these different discursive forms make (1987: 5). So what happens in the case of a novel (or narrative strand) like *an allergy*, which is presented as a newspaper (among other forms) or an anomalous text like ‘Pinto’s’ testimony, which is presented as history?

Pollack calls all realistic novels ‘simulations’ (2003). However, printed texts are more limited than other media to be presented as something else, and ‘the best a text can do is pretend to be a different type of text,’ (Pollack 2003) with most novels imitations or simulations of a nonfictional form, such as history, biography, autobiography or memoir, like most of *an allergy*’s different narratives.

Developments in literary discourse, criticism and information technology, such as the advent of post-modernism in which an entire generation of writers and critics have been tutored, and ‘elaborate systems of communication which spew out information, much of it unbelievable, about events of which we seldom have any direct knowledge’ (Lasch 1984: 133), have made it even more difficult for texts, especially fictional ones, to establish believability.

In such a fragmented, frenetic, commodified market society based on mass production and consumption, literature (simultaneously cultural artefact *and* commodity) can no longer effectively mediate, as it once did, between subjective experience and objective observation or fact and fiction (Lasch 1984: 133) and has become ‘ increasingly involved in the commodification, in particular, of identity’ (Takolander and McCooey 2004: 59).

This is reflected in the rise of false document and literary forgery in recent years as the ontological borderlines between ‘fact’ and fiction have blurred into

‘faction,’¹¹ making it even more difficult to distinguish between fictional false document and genuine forgery or hoax, least of all reality.

For Pollack, false document’s quality ‘lies in its relation to the real’ (2003). That is, its believability lies not in its *reference* to reality but its *relation* to it, similar to the distance between the authorial and narrative audiences. But this reality, as discussed above, is only a linguistic one based on our increasingly uncertain perceptions or assumptions of it.

Difference is a ‘truth-creating’ device (Riffaterre 1990: xvi), paralleling Pollack’s first distinguishing parameter of demanding that readers check between the ‘real’ and the ‘illusion’ against verifiable or corroboratory data (an exercise made problematic — and hopefully ironically entertaining — by *an allergy*’s juxtaposition between false documentary nonfictional narratives and fiction within it). In Takolander and McCooey’s view, ‘the fake presupposes the genuine. The fake author implies the real author, and fake literature presupposes real literature. But literature itself is often about — perhaps *fundamentally* about — successfully faking it’ (2004: 57) — which I hope *an allergy* can do.

But Jean Baudrillard disagrees, charging that ‘whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum’ (1994: 6). That is, in such a “precession,” a simulatory image progresses from reflecting a profound reality to masking and denaturing it, to masking such a profound reality’s absence, to having no relation to any reality whatsoever, finally becoming its own pure simulacrum, ultimately destroying reality altogether (1994: 5).

But if a simulation can negate or destroy “the real” ‘how valuable can something be if its own reflection or a parody of it can destroy it’ (Pollack 2003)? How can a fictional depiction of the past, especially a conventionally novelistic and self-admittedly fictional one like *The Secret River*, really supersede or usurp historical representations of it, especially when readers are aware it is fiction — no matter how well researched it is or “true” its author professes it to be — and read it accordingly?

Blaikie’s regular, often humorous and always enthusiastically subjective intrusions into “Pinto’s” testimony (like *History*’s) demonstrate Pollack’s second distinguishing

¹¹ An ironic epithet in light of the recent fraught debates, perhaps.

parameter, attribution. Recalling dual vocal origin and authorial narrative intrusion's incompatibility with verisimilitude, attribution reflects false document's *fundamental* fictionality, even as it depicts or simulates historical periods, people and places; and *especially* when it imitates or parodies historical discourse.

This leads to Pollack's third distinguishing parameter: intention. As she points out, 'a text ceases to be a false document — such as Alatheia Hunt's 'notebooks, diaries and papers... reproduced by kind permission of her father... [published] without alteration' (Ireland 1980: Editor's Note), Alex Dirmijian-Gray's memoirs ("edited" by Patrick White) or Ned Kelly's correspondence — and becomes a forgery or hoax when the author's intentions are misleading or misunderstood' (Pollack 2003).

In false document's strongest form, the author risks that a reader might be taken in. The author's winks to the knowing reader (such as "Walter Lehmann's" infamous acrostics in *Abelard to Eloisa* and *Eloisa to Abelard* [1961]) are crucial to nudging them to perform the sort of reality check false document demands. 'But winks may go unseen and what should be debated as a false document [may be] derided as a hoax' (Pollack 2003), like then-*Bulletin* editor Donald Horne's patronising response to 'the quaintly titled "lady poet" behind the suave European Lehmann' (Atherton 2002: 151), Gwen Harwood, whose argument — the relative lack of representation or respect given to "lady poets," and the way in which her poems' line construction was blithely pushed flush by an indiscriminate style guide — was obscured by condemnation over the ethics of her method.¹²

While this begs the question that hovers around any simulation or false document — 'how can we be sure of the author's intentions' (2003)? — it also reveals a flaw in Pollack's model, reflecting 'the difficulties the idea of intention represents' (Shillingsburg 1997: 124): what to make of a text when the author's intentions are

¹² Harwood wrote two sonnets with caesural indentations, ostensibly between the two famed lovers. Thus "marginalised," they revealed the acrostics 'So long Bulletin' and 'Fuck all editors.' Although Horne refused to publish any further poems by Harwood or "Lehmann," dubbing the hoax a 'sad jest (Horne 1961: 8),' she did publish further poems with *The Bulletin*, using further pseudonyms (Atherton 2002: 151); although as Peter Porter notes, 'her practice in no way resembles Fernando Pessoa's (Porter 2003: 411),' referring to the Portuguese poet whose work and consciousness was split between numerous complex heteronyms, 'going so far as to invent biographies for these poets and causing them to critique each other's work...' encouraging 'real critics [to] enter into Pessoa's project by ferreting out his poems and reconstructing the intricate universe of poetic influence he mapped for their creators (Pollack 2003). Interestingly, "pessoa" is Portuguese for "person."

unknown? Blaikie, now deceased, never revealed “Pinto’s” identity — either displaying impeccable journalistic ethics or else escaping exposure of his duplicity.

But *why?* *Wild Women*’s ostensibly historical remainder is more than plausible, engaging and entertaining. So why tack on a fictional episode to an ostensibly historical book, thereby undermining the authority of the whole, regardless of the fictional component’s believability? The paradox is that had Blaikie presented “Pinto’s” story fictionally even in a historical context, “Pinto’s” testimony would have been just as believable, if not *more*, because of the way we, as narrative audiences willingly suspend our disbelief reading fiction, as opposed to when we read history, which we read, as Clendinnen does, with ‘a critical alertness’ (1996).

Ruthven maintains that agency should be ascribed to the text rather than its author, given that, like Blaikie, their motives are ‘inscrutable’ and have to be divined before determining whether it is a hoax or forgery (2004: 39). Shillingsburg, referring to Harwood’s Lehmann hoax, agrees:

From that story I concluded that texts are not agentless. The linguistic text, the bibliographic code, the extra-textual significance of contexts, must be tied to agency and therefore to intentionality in some way... that sense of agency (whether correct or not) is determining factor in every reader’s interpretation of the text (1997: 160–162).

Despite Blaikie’s constant acknowledgments that ‘the legend is probably not true’ and that ‘although “Pinto’s” answers were tangled as a tin of worms... when the tangle was straightened out, what was most likely the truth began to emerge’ (1980: 79–83); given that it is presented as historical “fact” despite its apparent fictionality, ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr “Pinto” Hyde’ must be considered an entertaining and somewhat perplexing addition to “the Great Australian Literary Hoax.”

The Great Australian Literary Hoax

Australian literature, from Louis de Rougemont to Ern Malley, Wanda Koolmatric to Norma Khouri, has always been especially prone to false document’s strongest form: the literary hoax. The first — “George Barrington’s” apocryphal, fabricated and

falsely attributed *The History of New South Wales* (1802) reflects Caterson's hypothesis that:

The narrative of Australia as a hoax nation runs parallel to our more conventional history, but occasionally the stories intersect. Hoaxes lie at the foundation of the European discovery and settlement of the Australian continent, and familiar myths like that of the Anzacs, Bodyline and the Kelly Gang all have a substantial, if often over-looked, hoax component (2009: 15).

Indeed, what is mythology but a kind of hoax, a fiction purporting to be true?

Brian McHale identifies three kinds of hoax (1999: 261):¹³

1. the paradoxically named genuine hoax, whose intentions are to defraud or deceive for financial, ideological or emotional gain and not to be exposed, such as Norma Khouri's fake memoir *Forbidden Love* (2003); or Leon Carmen's Wanda Koolmatric hoax (1994);
2. the entrapment hoax, whose intentions are usually the humiliation of a particular publisher or intellectual community after exposure by the hoaxer, such as the "Ern Malley Affair" (1944); or more recently, the "*Quadrant* Hoax" (2011) fabricated to embarrass its editor, Windschuttle;¹⁴
3. and the mock hoax, similar to Pollack's definition of false document, which is not intended to deceive but to be recognised as a hoax or fake

¹³ Academics who have either a special interest or avocation in 'what are variously designated literary "forgeries," "frauds," "fakes," "hoaxes," "impostures," "spuriousities," "counterfeits" and "supercherries"' (Ruthven 2004: 3), such as McHale, Ruthven, Hunter Steele, Alice Beckett, Giles Constable and others, have extensively discussed the correct terminology for such phenomena, given the oxymoronic nature of McHale's terms "genuine" and "mock hoaxes."

As Ruthven comments, 'as the stockpile of incompatible definitions increases, the field of study appears correspondingly more disordered, and taxonomists are tempted to sort things out' even if such an attempt would ultimately 'suffer the same fate as other terms designed to taxonomise fake literature, each of which leads a social life quite independently of our Humpty-Dumptyish desire to make it mean exactly (and therefore only) what we want it to mean... no matter which term is used, the relationship between literarity and spuriousity is framed as a binary opposition, in which literature is valorised as the authentic Self and literary forgery disparaged as its bogus Other' (2004: 35; 3).

¹⁴ In which Gould, evoking Alan Sokal's famous hoax on the 'unreality of reality' 'Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity' at the height of the so-called 'science wars' (which took place at the same time as the history- and culture wars) submitted a fake scientific paper to *Quadrant* which was enthusiastically accepted by Windschuttle (for a further discussion of the 'Sokal Affair' see <http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/index.html>)

(almost) immediately or at most to deceive momentarily, the deception to be followed by a moment of recognition, in which a genuinely experimental writer plays conscious tricks with the notion of authorship, commensurate with a high degree of artistic integrity, such as *Memoirs of Many in One* (1986), *Gould's Book of Fish* or *True History of the Kelly Gang*.

To this typology, Caterson adds:

4. the false hoax, that is, truths which are assumed to be lies, such as Indigenous writer and activist Mudrooroo Narogin's strident criticisms about the authenticity of Sally Morgan's Aboriginal identity and her best-selling memoir, *Our Place* (1987);
5. and "true fakes," that is, fakes that are not concealed but which nevertheless are taken as true, such as Frank Hardy's (thinly-disguised) novel *Power Without Glory* (1950), famously sued for criminal libel; or Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1967), which, though presented as a novel was nonetheless assumed to have some basis in fact — an assumption hardly discouraged by Lindsay's prefatory "disclaimer:"

Whether *Picnic at Hanging Rock* is fact or fiction, my readers must decide for themselves ... As the fateful picnic took place in the year nineteen hundred, and all the characters who appear in the book are long since dead, it hardly seems important (Lindsay 1967: 6).

Memoir's often unreliable, unverifiable nature (such as "Pinto's" testimony purports to be) and its disruptive, discomfiting proximity to the borderline between history and fiction, 'where the uncertain relationship between truth and invention is nowhere more evident' (Caterson 2009: 159) provides an excellent point to examine the instability of such ontological and discursive borders, especially in the context of the Australian literary hoax and the rise, since the start of the history- and culture wars, of the "fake memoir," which further reveals the instability of identity in the quest for authenticity.

Not only this, but such narcissistic dependence, seeking determination of its own image in the unreliable images presented by mass-culture, politics or literature and

unable to distinguish between fact and fiction, has allowed the commodification of identity and authenticity, leading to fake memoirs and identity frauds such as *My Own Sweet Time* and *The Hand That Signed the Paper* — the controversies around which would later contribute to the historiographical criticism surrounding *The Secret River*, and historical fiction in general.

Just as no text can be read without being believable (no matter how fantastic or incredible it may seem), a hoax cannot be a hoax unless it is believed, and, accordingly, cannot be a hoax unless it is intended to be. While in the case of false document, Winterowd's co-operative contract is challenged or subverted, in the case of literary hoax, it is violated or broken.

Fake Memoirs and Assumed Names

As Clive James acknowledges in his *Unreliable Memoirs* (1980), recalling Blaikie's or Badgery's protestations about lies that may or may not tell the truth:

Most first novels are disguised autobiographies. This autobiography is a disguised novel. On the periphery, names and attributes of real people have been changed and shuffled so as to render identification impossible. Nearer the centre, important characters have been run through the scrambler or else left out completely. So really the whole affair is a figment got up to sound like truth (James 1980: 19).

James's "candour" is similar to Carey's defence in response to *True History of the Kelly Gang*'s historical accuracy or veracity: an acknowledgment of its fiction — or what Riffaterre calls a 'flouting of its fictionality' (1990: xv) — rather than any claims to truth, defusing any criticism of its veracity. Given McHale's point about the 'strange performance of memoir, halfway between fiction and testimony' which 'anyone in their right mind would know is unreliable' (quoted in Dotinga 2006) what explains the rise in recent years of subjective first-person narratives in fiction, autobiography and memoir?

Is it a coincidence such fake memoirs burgeoned during the history- and culture wars? Caterson thinks not, calling them 'part of the *Kulturkampf* that also gave rise to

One Nation' (2009: 148). How could anyone ignore the intensely political nature of these wars, refracted through national identity, racial authenticity and history? After all, Windschuttle did not write of the "fabrication" of *Australian* or *European settler* history; and these 'cultural identity crises' exposed in the public sphere the relationship between anxiety regarding authorial identity and anxiety regarding national identity (Takolander and McCooey 2004: 59).

Bearing in mind Davis and Lasch's perspective regarding the diminished, dependent, fractured narcissistic self, McHale's point that 'fragment, ruin, and forgery remain linked' is especially pertinent in light of such issues. 'This linkage is a feature of literary hoaxes such as Ern Malley, which still resonates in Australian literary culture today' (1999: 252).

This resonance is a lingering suspicion of literature, 'brought as a whole into disrepute by hoaxes' (Caterston 2009: 149). According to Graeme Turner, in 'the mass-mediated promotional world of fashion and celebrity, literature also appears to have become largely about the author's saleability rather than primarily about the book's "literary" quality' (1998: 11).

These concerns and anxieties make Lasch's hypotheses about dependent narcissism even more pertinent — and partly explain why identity hoaxes were so prevalent in the 1990s. With the increased commercialisation, production and consumption of culture; the rapid development and diffusion of media technology, including the 'influence of the conversational energy of the internet' (Mordue 2003: 4) — much less the rise of new "canons" like postmodernism and deconstructionism — is it any wonder that the novel's place in culture was so seriously diminished, as was authorial authority,¹⁵ with pronouncements about the death of the novel following similar ones about the death of the author? The number of subjective first-person narrators, often telling their tales in present tense, revealed (and continue to reveal) writers' anxieties about attempting to provide more than a provisional perspective, avoiding third-person narrative omniscience or past tense, either perhaps through a desire for textual experimentation or an avoidance of traditional, "canonical"

¹⁵ An admittedly tautological expression, given Shillingsburg's discussion of the term above.

approaches.¹⁶ As Riemer observed at the time, ‘fashion is a powerful incentive’ (1997: 17).

This uncertainty extended to the idea of “speaking for others.” As Franzen perceived it, ‘unfortunately, there’s evidence that... writers today feel ghettoised in their ethnic or gender identities’ (Franzen 1996: 47–48). Tom Keneally, despite depicting the story of a murderously wronged Aborigine in *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1972) so evocatively and powerfully, later confessed he ‘would not dare do it for this reason that generally unless you’re part of a culture it is hard to put yourself in it. If I was writing *The Chant* now I would not presume to put myself in the mind of a tribalised half-Aboriginal half-European’ (quoted in Hughes 2002). Grenville later expressed similar reservations in depicting Aboriginal characters and consciousnesses in *The Secret River*.

As a result of this reluctance by novelists to such ‘presumption,’ the valorisation of identitarian testamentary narratives such as memoir, means ‘impostors, in particular, flourish when we regard the background and identity of the singer as being as important as the song’ (Caterson 2009: 56). But what both crises and the debates surrounding them revealed were not only the commodification of identity, but the ways in which nebulous, emotive issues of imaginative empathy, truth and authenticity determined the nature of these debates, refracted by those of the history– and culture wars.

¹⁶ Reflected in recent criticism by writers such as Philip Pullman and Philip Hensher about the fashionable profusion of first-person present tense historical novels on literary awards shortlists, with the majority of the 2010 Man Booker Prize shortlist in 2010 written in present tense. Pullman dislikes it because of its falsehood. Like the hand-held camera, present tense seems to say ‘we were there when these things happened. It was all happening there right in front of us. It was all urgent and real.’ Such duplicity is ‘an abdication of narrative responsibility... “If I just relate now what’s happening now,” the writer seems to say, “I can’t be held to account for it” (2010) (although this belies fiction’s essential falsehood, surely?). Reflecting Hensher’s assertion that ‘it’s the past-tensors who start to sound bolder, more interested in the possibilities of language (2010),’ see Paul Dawson’s excellent article, ‘The Return of Omniscience in Contemporary Fiction’ (2009).

Creative Freedom and Imaginative Empathy

Before their exposures, Wanda Koolmatrie's memoir *My Own Sweet Time* and Demidenko's novel *The Hand That Signed the Paper* were critically acclaimed for their "authenticity," winning between them the Dobbie Literary Award for best debut novel by a woman; *The Australian/Vogel* Award for best unpublished manuscript by a writer under 35; the Miles Franklin Award; and the Australian Society of Literature's gold medal.

Even if Koolmatrie's identity was uncertain, the perceived authenticity and rhetorical authority of her memoir was not. It was praised by Indigenous critic Philip Morrissey; published by an Aboriginal publishing house; launched by Indigenous poet and activist Bobbi Sykes; and "Wanda's" Dobbie award was accepted on her behalf by Lydia Miller, the Executive Director of the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board. If they couldn't tell, who could?

Similarly, Demidenko's book was praised and defended by a number of critics from across a range of disciplines and political standpoints, from the liberal left to the libertarian right (Rundle 1997: 209–210), including Marr, Paddy McGuinness, Andrew Riemer, Don Anderson, Vic Alhadeff (of the *Australian Jewish News*), Marion Halligan, Frank Devine and others (Marr 1995: 4), with Jean Kitson, the chair of the Miles Franklin judging committee, commending the way in which it 'recreated the terrible events of the Holocaust... with wonderful "authenticity"' (Tranter 2012 [1995]).

Although Takolander and McCooey say 'ethnicity and victimhood are deeply implicit in such frauds' (2004: 58), as Nolan points out, *Sweet Time*'s 'relentless positivity' marked not only 'its difference from other Stolen Generations narratives,' but also 'resisted a clichéd reading of Aboriginal selfhood' (2004: 141).'

Morrissey explained why he'd read *Sweet Time* with 'uncomplicated pleasure,' explaining that Oodgeroo's "Eleven Commandments of Aboriginal Writing" and Mudrooroo's influential theory of "textual Aboriginality" (which declared that any Aboriginal-authored text could be evaluated to extent of the "Aboriginality" it contained) had established a "repressive authenticity," with Aboriginal writers under pressure to produce representative works which spoke for an essential or universal Aboriginal condition... requiring performative and declaratory forms of dogmatic and

static notions of Aboriginality' (2003: 300–302).¹⁷ Indeed, *Sweet Time* was widely praised as having 'a distinctive, zestful dignity' (Fraser 1995: 11) with 'adjectives like "enthusiastic," "energetic" and "sassy" permeating the reviews' (Nolan 2004: 142).

In attempting to turn what he admitted 'fitted the dictionary definition of trickery and deceit' into a "mock" hoax, Carmen claimed "creative freedom," saying he 'wanted to illustrate there is not really such a thing as black writing or white writing or women's writing or there needn't be. The same kind of mind could belong in any category' (Jopson 1997b: 38).

But Gerard Henderson's opinion that 'if Carmen had acknowledged that [it] was a novel, the author's true identity would not have mattered all that much' (1997: 21)¹⁸ was countered by Anita Heiss, who argued: 'as a reader, if I were interested in reading a text on lesbian love I wouldn't choose a text written by a heterosexual man, but one written by a lesbian. I wouldn't want the perceptions of what a man imagines it might or might not be like to be a lesbian in love. Nor would I find it relevant' (1998). This raises the question: what might she make of, say, *Madame Bovary* (1857) or *Anna Karenina* (1877)? Or *an allergy*, not only *Local History* — but *History*, *His Story* and *Her Story* as well — which feature female protagonists or narrators, a number of whom are lesbian — much less *Local History*'s depiction of Aborigines?

Or the work of A. M. Homes, who Jeanette Winterson says 'is gay but describes herself more honestly as bisexual... although we both hate it that sexual choice can be used to define the work. In any case, most of A.M.'s characters are heterosexual' (2012)? In an early interview, Homes responded to questions about her work's predominant "masculinity" that: 'I choose the least likely person to tell the story, because they bring a perspective to it that I wouldn't have... I feel that I understand men better than women' (quoted in Crewdson 1996).

¹⁷ These criticisms, made by Mudrooroo against Sally Morgan, that 'just because something is written by someone who identifies as an Aborigine doesn't make it an Aboriginal work' (Cateron 2009: 145), could also have been made against him, given subsequent questions about his own Aboriginality only a month later.

¹⁸ Interestingly, Morag Fraser deemed *Sweet Time* 'a wide-eyed novel' (1995: 11), and despite endorsing it, Sykes tellingly called it 'an un-black sort of book' at the launch (Nolan 2004: 141), while Morrissey questioned whether it was a hoax or not a number of times (2003: 299; 302).

Would Heiss deem ‘lesbian-themed’ work by Homes more authentic or ‘relevant?’ By her logic, can Heiss write only about characters who resemble her, or conform to her own identities, whether female or Indigenous? Does *she* feel any anxiety or reservations about depicting white men in her fiction? More importantly, if so, *why*?

Surely depicting *any* person’s life outside our own is an imaginative act, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, class, no matter how closely they may resemble the author, demographically or otherwise? Isn’t what makes any depiction convincing not how mimetically realistic it might appear, but how closely it corresponds to the reader’s own perceived sense of *themselves*? Isn’t that the imaginative power — and narcissistic nature — of literature? As Miller argues, ‘my self is intimately tied up with my being embodied in a way that distinguishes me from others so that I am aware that I see their bodies differently and more fully than I see my own. That means the only full view I can get of myself requires others’ (2003: 124). In other words, ‘a profound narcissism lies at the root of our inter-subjectivity’ (Takolander 2005: 314).

It does, in the end, go back to intention. As Constable reminds us, ‘the intention to deceive is as central as the actual deception’ (1996: 3). When a fictional text is presented as autobiography (rather than as a false documentary parody), it feels as if it violates authorship’s most basic ethics (Caterson 2005: 7), as well as the implicit co-operative contract between writer and reader in a way that autobiographically-based fiction does not.

Apart from this violation, Heiss rightly highlighted that *Sweet Time*’s assumed authenticity was based on ‘someone who couldn’t be further from the mind set and experience of an Aboriginal woman, regardless of how much research he did — which [Carmen] confessed was none. He admitted to never even meeting an Aboriginal woman,’ which she contended ‘reflect[ed his] attitude towards Indigenous people’ (1998).

Carmen and his co-conspirator John Bayley chose to expose themselves a week after Eddie Burrup was revealed to be the patrician Dame Elizabeth Durack (whose family’s immense wealth had come with the dispossession and exploitation of Aboriginal people) and at the height of Hansonism and the start of the culture wars. It seemed opportunistically timed to ride on the then-current wave of anti-Aboriginal feeling in Australian politics and Australian public life (Morrissey 2003: 300) — not

least embarrassing a small Aboriginal publishing house with limited funds to publish already marginalised voices to make a spurious point about the supposed difficulties for middle aged white men to get published — by exploiting an issue as painful as the Stolen Generations, all amply supporting Heiss’s point.¹⁹

As King observes, ‘many [presumed] mock hoaxers [like Carmen] are genuine hoaxers with delusions of decency’ (2010). Despite Carmen stating that ‘it seemed the only way to get into print,’ the fact that he didn’t choose to reveal it after publication, or after winning the Dobbie, but after his publisher demanded to meet “Wanda” before accepting her sequel, indicate a genuine hoax. And his subsequent craven justifications were nothing less than hypocritical. As Nolan points out, ‘while Carmen claims he chose Koolmatrie as his narrator because her status as an Indigenous woman and member of the stolen generations seemed to him the most oppressed subject position he could think of to occupy, his hoax was grounded in an envy of the perceived rewards that came with that position, and the purpose of the hoax was to prove that Carmen is, in fact, worse off than [her]’ (2004: 146).

Although Dobbie Prize judge Elizabeth Webby called Carmen’s hoax ‘an act of colonisation,’ she also warned against ‘drawing some arbitrary line which artists cannot cross. “I do not think there is any line as far as the imagination goes... the claim we make for writing and reading is that it allows us to experience other lives we wouldn’t otherwise experience”’ (quoted in Jopson 1997: 38).

But as Shillingsburg indicates, ‘the agent of meaning, the reader’s sense of who it was that “did” the text, has a great deal to do with one’s enjoyment of or dismay with the text’ (1997: 160–162). Indeed, ‘the uniqueness of Wanda’s perspective... dissolves when [it] is read as the expression of a white man’ (Nolan 2004: 142).

Heiss’s concerns are shared by Dymphna Callaghan who asserts that ‘the contention that the imagination knows no boundary will not suffice,’ with ‘the mechanism whereby identities are colonised the process of commodification’ (1995: 196–197), in a form of appropriation informed and contextualised by the history of Indigenous dispossession. As Ruthven points out, ‘in the reign of identity politics...

¹⁹ Lydia Miller noted after Carmen’s exposure, ‘any claim that he would be advantaged by pretending to be an Aboriginal woman was false, because only three indigenous authors were currently published by major publishing houses (Miller quoted in Jopson 1997a: 7), and as Henderson pointed out, even when the manuscript had been submitted as “Wanda’s”, it was rejected by two major publishers (1997: 21).

“empathy” becomes ideologically suspect. If nobody has the right to speak for anybody else, then to do so is an invasive act... in multicultural societies marked by social inequalities between different ethnic groups, “empathy” is unmasked as a myth of benevolence designed by the powerful to justify their practice of selectively appropriating the cultures of the powerless’ (Ruthven 2004: 26–27). This aptly describes both the outrageousness of Carmen’s imposture and the justifiable anger regarding it.

Fiction, Faction and Truth

Although *My Own Sweet Time* is an archetypical genuine hoax — a fraud, by any analysis — *The Hand That Signed the Paper* is, at first glance, more problematic. Unlike *Sweet Time*, *The Hand* (as Manne called it [1997a: 29]) was ostensibly fiction. Henderson’s assertion that Carmen’s true identity would not have mattered if he had called *Sweet Time* a novel do not seem to take into account the controversy surrounding Helen D’s true identity. But as Riemer noted, ‘the remarkable thing about *The Hand* was that it was so straightforward and uncomplicated [as a novel]. That allowed it to acquire its spurious aura of authenticity — despite those words at the beginning of the Author’s Note which “Demidenko’s” antics helped most people to ignore: “What follows is a work of fiction” (1997: 17). To a *degree*, anyway:

The Kovalenko family depicted in this novel has no counterpart in reality. Nonetheless, it would be ridiculous to pretend that this is unhistorical (1994: vi).

Compare the Author’s Note in conscientious creative nonfiction such as *Writer’s*, which warns the reader of its occasional or necessary fictiveness: here, even as *The Hand* protests its fictionality, it proclaims its historicity, telling us (in somewhat tortured syntax) that the lies are, in fact, *true* — an ironic paradox, considering the subsequent *actual* truth.

Like Khouri later on, Helen D described her book as “faction” (Caterson 2011: 129). Defending the book, she wrote ‘some critics have conflated me with a character in my book. Because part of the text is written in the first-person, there’s an

assumption that Irish-Ukrainian Fiona Kovalenko must be Irish-Ukrainian Helen Demidenko' (1995: 15).

But as Henderson points out, 'the central criticism of *The Hand* was not that Helen Demidenko proved to be Helen Darville. Rather it turned on the assertion, both inside and outside the book, that [it] was based on historical facts or "faction"' (Henderson 1997: 21). Marr acknowledged this in his defence of the book after her exposure: 'I'd absorbed the fantasy of Helen D's Ukrainian family before I read the manuscript and I know that part of my excitement then was my sense that this text had some authenticity as a kind of oral history... despite the disclaimers up the front (1995: 4).'

Helen D's claims to the book's fictionality are complicated by Manne's allegations that the protagonist's name was changed from Demidenko in the manuscript to Kovalenko (Manne 1996b: 29; China 2003: 3); and, as Malcolm Knox (who also exposed Khouri's fraud) reported, that she submitted the manuscript to the University of Queensland Press in early 1993 as nonfiction, with the then-Author's Note stating: 'the things narrated in this book really happened, the things they did [are] historical actualities' (2005).

Of course, pseudonyms have existed in literature as long as false document: what other vocation has *two* terms for the assumption of a false name (discussed in great detail by Gérard Genette in his study of paratexts [1997])? One of Australia's greatest writers gave her pen name *and* her actual name to two national literary awards. Even the author of the essay from which this thesis takes its name is pseudonymous, as are the authors whose epigrams are quoted at *Local History*'s opening.

But it's one thing to write under a pen name, as Miles Franklin (Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin), who gave her name to the prize Helen D would win, did (although family and friends always called her 'Miles'). As "Walter Lehmann" proved, it wasn't only early Australian women writers who found it difficult to be published under their real names; and even today, one can hardly say the same of white, middle aged white men, even ones like Carmen. It's another thing altogether to assume a fictional identity and write "their" autobiography as Carmen did, or to imply that the fiction presented was somehow autobiographical as Helen D did.

Unlike *Sweet Time*, which was generally applauded until its exposure, *The Hand* (as Manne called it [1997a: 29]) was the subject of heated, divisive and vituperative debates across disciplinary and political lines, especially after it won the Miles

Franklin Award. But after their exposures, ‘the controversies [surrounding the awards given to both books] tended to intensify when the judges of these prizes maintained that their decisions had been dominated by aesthetic rather than identitarian concerns’ (Nolan and Dawson 2004: ix). Paradoxically, though, ‘such claims served to confirm the view that affirmative action policies might produce imposture’ (2004: ix), and confirmed the suspicions of many about the way Indigenous or multicultural writing and authors were valorised and privileged — a justification exploited by Carmen: ‘the time seemed to be ripe. Authors as personalities were attracting more attention than their books’ (Carmen 1997: 27).

Helen D used the same spurious defence: ‘I formed the opinion, after looking around a fair bit, that ethnic essentialism had reached such a state that if you tried to tell a multi-cultural or ethnic story and you weren’t then you either wouldn’t get published or you wouldn’t be given any sort of credence... So I had to find a way around it’ (quoted in Dalley 1997). However, this does not account for the fact that the Vogel is awarded to unidentified manuscripts. It is also interesting that just as *The Hand*’s champions were apparently swayed by the author’s identity, so too were its critics, with some of its most influential and vociferous acknowledging they’d read the book *after* reading or seeing her post-Miles Franklin Award interviews, outraged as much by what she said in the media as anything they subsequently read in the book, their reading as preconditioned by her comments as her defenders were by her “biography” (Stewart 1997). If frauds like *Sweet Time* and *The Hand* exploit the idea that the singer’s identity is more important than the song, then it is even truer of the controversy that follows its exposure — and those in the chorus.

Authentic Rhetoric and Inauthentic Identities

The controversies around *Sweet Time* and *The Hand* (in addition to the subsequent controversies over Mudrooroo, Sykes and Charlie Wells' Aboriginality) exposed the complexity and fragility of identity. As Takolander says, 'cultural identity is, like personal identity, temporal and dynamic rather than permanent and finite' (2005: 316–317). But more than this, Koolmatrie and Demidenko exposed what poet John Tranter calls 'the middle-class illusion of "authenticity"' (2012 (1995), in which marketplace demands commodify authentic identity (Nolan 2004: 143).

'Authenticity' itself, like 'truth' or 'authority' is a problematic term. Charles Lindholm proposes 'two overlapping modes for characterising any entity (or text) as authentic: genealogical or historical (origin) and identity or correspondence (content). Persons are authentic if they are true to their roots or if their lives are a direct and immediate expression of their essence. Collectives [or ethnic communities] are authentic if their biological heritage can be traced and if the members act in the proper, culturally valued manner... authentic objects, persons and collectives are original, real, and pure; they are what they purport to be, their roots are known and verified, their essence and appearance are one' (2008: 2)

In such a light, and especially given the problematic issue of the erasure of much Aboriginal identity by colonisation, Alexis Wright's point that 'the myth of authenticity is a notion held by those least able, and with the least right, to judge. It is the creature of the elite inheritors of our colonial oppressors' (2001: 128), is a pertinent one. Penny van Toorn adds that 'unlike writers from dominant ethnic groups, Aboriginal and other non-Anglo-Celtic Australian writers [are] required to prove their authenticity and put their cultural identity on display' (2000: 41).

For Lasch's heirs, such as David Boyle (2003) or Andrew Potter (2010), the search for the authentic provides a powerful source of meaning in an alienating, secular, conformist world — especially in a country like Australia, unsure of its identity, history or place in the world — yet our renewed lust for authenticity, ironically figured as products (such as novels) for sale, is actually a form of shallow, consumerist, exclusionary status-seeking, with the kind of books we buy as much a lifestyle statement or status symbol as other advertised, marketed, 'desirable' consumer goods, even as it asserts its supposed disconnection from such a market

society. This identity construction via the novel-as-status symbol is encapsulated by Don DeLillo's proclamation that 'if serious reading dwindles to near nothingness, it will probably mean that the thing we're talking about when we use the word "identity" has reached an end' (quoted in Franzen 1996: 54).

As such, Takolander and McCooey claim that this 'aspirational' audience, whose own 'identity relies upon the literary as a status symbol of their aesthetic and ethical integrity, is the target market for literature in Australia today... and the target audience of contemporary Australian literary fakes' (2004: 58).

But Kateryna Olijnik Longley's contention that 'the hoax was for the press and the public unforgivable, not because of the fraud itself but because it exposed, by means of this double twist, Australian mainstream culture's complicity in [Helen D's] act by way of its fascination with the exotic' (1997: 39) is only *partly* correct. While the controversy surrounding the fraud did reveal complicity and fascination with the exotic in the way Helen D (like Carmen) appeared to demonstrate a cynical perception of both the nature of literature as fakery and of the literary, in contemporary Australia, as ethical commodity (Takolander & McCooey 2004: 58), those like Marr (1995), Kitson or Kramer who'd defended the book continued to do so on aesthetic grounds; those like Henderson (1995, 1997), Manne (1995, 1996 et al), or Longley who'd attacked it continued to do so on ideological ones.

No-one who supported the book then denounced it after the fact: Anderson, (recalling the believability of 'Pinto's' fictional testimony) deemed its 'achievement all the more considerable if claims of fiction or nonfiction are ignored' (1996: 14). If anything, the reason there was a perception Helen D was condemned is because many of her defenders left the field under the onslaught of such relentless criticism: 'so what say the Miles Franklin Award judges? [They] appear to have remained silent' (Henderson 1995: 11).

Given how the responses to both frauds inspired a profusion of commentary and debate in a wide number of books, newspaper articles and academic discussion — far, far more than could be possibly considered here — it might be argued that if fiction offers a way, via simulacry means, to reconsider 'reality,' then literary fakery offers a similarly artificial means to reconsider fiction and the ways not only in which it or 'those cultural institutions which accredit and mediate literature' (Ruthven 2004: 2–3) operate, but how, through our reactions to such hoaxing, we perceive or engage with

these artefacts and institutions. By such terms, if fiction is ‘lies that tell the truth’ then perhaps literary hoaxes — or rather, their exposure — are the truth about the lies that purport to tell the truth about those lies that purport to tell the truth. Not just because ‘entrapment’ and ‘mock’ hoaxes always intend such exposure, but because the repercussions and responses to ‘genuine’ hoaxes (which don’t) reveal even more about our assumptions regarding society, identity and history, in a way fiction once did. Imposture’s importance (both actual and literary) lies precisely in how it is able to lay bare the assumptions of its own society (McKenzie 2009: 295–296). As King points out:

All hoaxes are about identity and in Australia identity has always been unstable. No wonder, then, that we are addicted to hoaxes, and no wonder that the themes of history and forgery continue to collide in our literature. In Richard Flanagan’s *Gould’s Book of Fish* the principal character is a convict and a forger whose ‘soul is in a process of constant ... reinvention.’ What is true of Gould’s soul is true of Australia — such that historians continue to argue over even the most fundamental questions (2010).

Which partly explains why responses to Grenville and her admittedly fictional *The Secret River* were as vehement as those to Carmen and his fake memoir or Helen D and her fraudulent faction. While Rabinowitz says ‘these quarrels often deal ostensibly with a specific text (such as *Sweet Time*, *The Hand* or *The Secret River*), they unintentionally and unconsciously reveal something more general: a fundamental inadequacy in the way we talk about literature... if pursued, such quarrels can transcend their initial subjects and lead us to substantial critical insights’ (1977: 121), they can also lead to even more substantial, even more critical insights into ourselves and our idea of ourselves.

Frontier Skirmishes

So, why the strong historiographical antipathy to Grenville and her book, which, unlike *The Hand*, was not glossed with false autobiographical authenticity, nor presented as fact?

What is the relationship between the history of hoaxing and the hoaxing of history (King 2010)? And how does it relate to historiographical reading, interpretation, criticism and antipathy to Grenville's conventionally fictional book?

Although the correspondence between Grenville and her critics is far too detailed to address here (and Sue Kossew's collection of essays on Grenville, *Lighting Dark Places* [2010] offers much more comprehensive commentary), it is striking how quickly violent misinterpretations turn on the frontier of Australian history — both actual and discursive. Such paradoxical reactions to what was ostensibly fiction reveal 'the contradictory nature of literature — as an ethically neutral "space of writing" and as an ethically charged engagement with others' (Takolander and McCooey 2004: 60).

Seen in the light of the history- and culture wars, centred around frontier history and race relations, and the spate of identity crises that came before them, Grenville's claims of imaginative empathy, truth and authenticity may have *sub-textually* reignited the ethical criticisms surrounding *Sweet Time* and *The Hand*, as well as over the contentious *Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (2002). After all, for Windschuttle, one the history wars' early raiders, 'much Australian history is, if not a hoax, then a fabrication' (King 2010), as his strangely hollow 'trilogy' indicates (missing as it does the middle volume).

Grenville's defenders, assuming aesthetic responses to historiographical criticisms, also assumed that such criticisms were based on aesthetic, discursive or methodological lines. The heart of the matter was what historians perceived as Grenville's public claims that the novel was not merely true, but somehow *truer* than history. While Clendinnen avoided in 1996 'any comment on the "truth" of fiction,' Grenville's claims that *The Secret River* transcended history 'had [her] walking around the room in fury' (Sullivan 2006). McKenna was equally annoyed: 'Grenville claims for her fiction ... beyond politics, beyond controversy, in some kind of

“balanced” utopia (as if her novel were miraculously free of any interpretative stance on the past)’ (2006: 103–104).

The second charge, disputing fiction’s greater supposed empathy and imaginative understanding, was also a major point of contention. As McKenna argues, ‘her depiction of history [ignores] the large body of work by Australian historians that seeks empathy and “imaginative understanding” (together with “argument” and “analysis”). Surely it is not only the novelist who can stand outside polarised debates and seek to understand the past, and seek to find empathy’ (2006: 103–4)?

Moreover, while empathy with the protagonist is a common feature of fiction, says Eleanor Collins, the reader (who would be a part of the narrative audience in this case) is also put in a position of empathetic judgment over the character, placing the reader in a discomfiting and ambiguous position, given that empathy, by its very nature, precludes reproach (2010: 174).

This fictional empathy and understanding is also undermined by Grenville’s reluctance to depict Aboriginal viewpoints, which Clendinnen charged, further exoticised and marginalised the Aboriginal figures in the book by ‘refusing to bestow on them anything more than a compelling physical presence and an indestructible nobility’ (2007: 76). This echoes Trinh Minh-ha’s observation of anthropology becoming ‘a conversation of “us” with “us” about “them...” in which “them” is silenced. “Them” always stands on the other side of the hill, naked and speechless’ (1989: 65, 67).

Linda Alcoff argues that speaking for others is often born of a self-congratulatory desire for mastery to privilege oneself as someone who more correctly understand the truth about another’s situation even as it can lead to even greater reinforcement of the oppression such ‘spoken for groups’ suffer (1991: 6–7). Equally, not speaking for others ignores the effect of such silence may have on those very ‘Others,’ speechless on the hill, and if motivated by a desire to avoid criticism or make any errors, suggests a desire for an equally privileged discursive position of ‘personal mastery

over collective goals of understanding’ and immunity from critical interrogation (1991: 21–22).²⁰

Craig McCormick calls for ‘recognition, not appropriation. “If the people you are representing say “That’s okay — you can do that,” I think you haven’t breached ethics. If [they] do not... then that is a breach of ethics”’ (quoted in Bantick 1998) (an approach similar to Hsu-Ming Teo’s in interviewing Vietnamese readers and asking them to preview the work for approval of their depiction in her novel *Behind the Moon* [2005] [Pham 2006]).

According to Webby, ‘the bruising Grenville took — the row over “history versus fiction” — after the publication of *The Secret River* was largely about turf wars’ (Cosic 2011), a charge made even more potent by the title of Clendinnen’s *Dancing With Strangers* (2005: 86) (itself ironically also published, like *The Secret River*, by Text Publishing).

This territoriality about a central moment in Clendinnen’s book and McKenna’s complaint about ‘the way certain novelists are now courted in the media as historical authorities... at the expense of history’ (2006: 100), supports Webby’s argument to a degree. But informed by tensions surrounding racial identity and black history in the wake of Howard’s declaration of the history– and culture wars, it is understandable that historians like Clendinnen, McKenna and others who had worked so extensively in addressing and ‘confronting the history of dispossession in frontier history’ (McKenna 2006: 106) would find what they saw as Grenville’s cavalier transposition of ‘the Curious Incident of the Old Man and the Spade’ (Clendinnen 2007: 75) so inflammatory.

²⁰ While such charges could be levelled against the depiction of the Jindyworobak Mob in *Local History*, its name — derived from the white literary movement founded as a reaction to colonial attitudes and a counter to internationalist influences in Australian society and culture, and the Woiwurrung word ‘to annex’ — reflects the disconnection of non-Aboriginal society from, and the marginalisation of Indigenous culture and society, as reflected in the misunderstanding and vitriol in published letters to *The Chronicle* (and lack of any corresponding contrary views) in Chapter 5. The racist epithets and stereotypes depicted are also indicative of attitudes at the time — growing up, I was called all those names (just as I changed my name, like ‘Wal Singh and Matilda’ from Sunil to Neil as a futile way of assimilating, discussed further in my story ‘Stones and Sticks and Such-like’ (*Growing Up Asian in Australia* [2008])). However, as Aurora, the protagonist of *Her Story*, is part-Aboriginal, it is hoped the depiction of her and her family will be offer more agency than that of the Jindies.

Grenville discussed this ‘denial’ of ‘the idea of ourselves as the ‘other’ here, saying that many non-Aboriginal ‘native-born’ Australians’ anxieties about proving they are not foreign or alien have resulted in appropriating Aboriginal identity, with these feelings of alienation and non-belonging having been repressed, resulting in these anxieties resurfacing in antagonism towards the arrival of new kinds of ‘others’ (2006a).

As Nolan points out, ‘the positive reception that [*Sweet Time*] was accorded can be read as a manifestation of a desire among white Australians for the effects of the past to be erased and the narrative’s distinction [to be] understood as a triumph of assimilation (2004: 142).’

Such assimilative moving on may only be a journey to a new kind of forgetting (McKenna 2006: 106), similar to Howard’s call to ‘move on’ from the ‘supposed shame’ of the past and the ‘black armband view that we should apologise for it’ (2006). In *Local History* this is expressed by Boo’s denial of the darker moments of the District’s history and her own possible ‘shadiness;’ and her accepted distrust of ‘abos,’ ‘towelheads,’ ‘Eye-ties’ and ‘Chinamen,’ refracted through her own uncertain, unverifiable family history and amnesia.

Grenville’s protestations of historical accuracy or fictional truth are nothing like Helen D’s fraudulent factionalist defence. But it might have been those very similarities — not only the assertion of a novel’s historical truth but the claiming of authenticity (whether falsely ethnic in Helen D’s case, or actually familial in Grenville’s) — and refracted through such fraught racial and historical issues — that caused such uproar. McKenna’s observations of *Searching*, that the public telling in confessional mode of confronting the past makes it even more important and powerful than the text itself (2006: 106), imply so.

Fictive History and True History (of the Kelly Gang)

In such a context, why — despite being presented as Ned Kelly’s lost letters and written in his putative voice — was the provocatively titled *True History of the Kelly*

Gang not excoriated by historians in the way that Grenville's more conventionally novelistic book was?

One reason might be the snobbery towards 'historical fiction' as opposed to 'literary historical fiction.' As Miriam Cosic reported, despite so much academic discussion and debate regarding Grenville's work, many (male) academics referred her to 'women academics who might have something useful to say... the word "middlebrow" tentatively floated' (2011). But what makes something 'high' or 'middlebrow,' exactly? And who gets to decide?

Another, as Brigid Rooney wonders in relation to Grenville, might be 'a gendering of public discourse... gravitas and authority cling more easily to male authors for some reason' (quoted in Cosic 2011). This contention is also hard to dismiss, given Clendinnen's admiration for her 'favourite novel' J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), which 'having done all this good history... kicks loose, inventing things which might have happened but we don't know did, because they are the kind of things that records always miss' (2006: 29), and the way Carey 'won her heart as a Brisbane Writers' Festival... when a string of people were interrogating him increasingly hostile[ly] about *True History*' (2006: 32).

True History was simply the latest addition to a long line of popular cultural and artistic depictions of Kelly and his gang, from the very start of the so-called 'Kelly Outbreak,' from song to painting, theatre to film (including *The Story of the Kelly Gang* [1906], the world's first full-length feature). And fiction, including Robert Drewe's *Our Sunshine* (1991) (itself later adapted into a film), all contributing to an extensive mythology — as well as what then-Federal Police Commissioner Sir Colin Woods called 'Ned Kelly Syndrome' (1982), featuring not only an obsessive interest in 'Kellyana' but identification with and valorisation of criminals in general (such as Captain Thunderbolt, Ben Hall, Squizzy Taylor, Tilly and Kate, Mark 'Chopper' Read, John Ibrahim and others).²¹ Moreover (like the Ern Malley case), it was an interrogation of class and mythology, and did not tread on the same fraught frontier territories of history and race that *The Secret River* or *The Hand* did.

²¹ Such identification is not only revealed by sympathetic accounts of criminals such as *Wild Women* or *Razor*, but more recently by Ross Cameron's comparison of then-fugitive rapist and murderer Malcolm Naden to Kelly: 'The Minister for Police, Michael Gallacher, is urging us not to turn the fugitive Malcolm Naden into a cult figure. He might just as well ask the National Gallery to remove its 26 paintings of Kelly' (2011).

Additionally, Kelly's 'lost' letters are clearly identified as 'false documents,' while Grenville's ostensibly fictitious narrative was presented (despite her subsequent denials) 'as close as we are going to get to what it was actually like... I haven't made it up, I just put a novelist's flesh on the bones of the documents' (quoted in Sullivan 2005) or 'it seemed really important that people would not say "oh, it's just a novel — she just made it all up"' (2006).

Novels may be 'lies that tell the truth' but it seems for Clendinnen and McKenna they have to be relatively upfront about the deception (as Schama wasn't). As Grenville responded: 'Of course, it would have been simpler to answer all questions about *The Secret River* in the way Clendinnen describes Peter Carey doing when interviewed about *True History*: by saying flatly, unanswerably: "I made it up"' (Grenville 2005).

However, this defence does not account for what these historians see as Grenville's presumption and duplicity regarding her novel's historical veracity. As McKenna argues, 'for Grenville, it is not enough to make a claim for her work as fiction alone. When novelists ask that we read their work as if it were faithful to history, we should ask the obvious question: how can we know (2006: 105)?

Given Carey's long interest in the contested and often undocumented nature of Australian history in his work, from *Illywhacker* to *My Life as a Fake* (2003) (which fictionalised the fictional Ern Malley), his simulation of Kelly's voice and 'lost' letters may not only invite readers to question 'the official record' or 'structured narrative of history' by confirming the assumptions or assertions within the novel against the verifiable data in the archive but to — like other false documentarians such as Borges, Nabokov, Ireland or White — 'continually to remind readers of the complex nature of literary truth' (Rabinowitz 1977: 123), refracted through such a popularly accepted myth.

That is, unlike Grenville, who seemed to seek to fictionally 'complete' or 'supersede' or 'surmount' history, Carey might be considered to have only sought to question *literary* truth, especially via such a 'familiar myth with such a substantial hoax component.'

In such a light, Carey's 'it's just fiction' defence about *True History* seems disingenuous in comparison to his earlier claims for *Oscar and Lucinda*, which sound a lot like Grenville's about *The Secret River*, raising further problematic questions

about why he won Clendinnen's heart so and managed to evade the criticism levelled at Grenville:

There are these two extraordinary things in our national life: the concentration camp that was built for us and this great murder that took place by our forebears ... the guilt level's very high, but you have a sense of trespassing even when you begin to think of writing about it... At the same time to write within what I could know and imagine — the best of us writers can imagine anything — while avoiding what I couldn't know... so I hope that at the end of the book you have a really strong sense of the crimes or murders that were committed, and that might make the country a bit better at the same time (quoted in Dutton 1988: 7)

His Life as a Fake

Another reason that Carey might have been let off the historiographical hook is equally connected to literary hoaxes and identity frauds. Takolander and McCooey propose that the very reasons 'Demidenko' was celebrated were the very same that he is:

At his appearance at the Melbourne Writers' Festival to promote *Fake...* Fraser, the session chair... while ostensibly parodying media representations of Carey, nevertheless reinforced in an intensely personalising and fetishizing introduction not only Carey's status as both familiar Australian and exotic internationalist but also the paradoxically exoticist nature of the 'authenticity fix' for which the festival audience [and many readers] were hungering (2004: 61).

Perhaps the only difference between the identity construction of a 'fake' author like 'Demidenko' from that of a 'real' author like Carey is only 'the extent that it [has been] demystified as such' (Peres da Costa 2002: 77). Indeed, isn't Carey's name on the cover of a book as important to its sales and reception as 'Demidenko's' supposedly was? As Lloyd Jones said of winning the South-East Asia and South Pacific division of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, 'I thought Peter Carey would win because Peter Carey is meant to win' (Wyndham 2007).

If, as Doctorow argues, ‘the public figure... makes a fiction of himself long before the novelist gets to him is almost beside the point... they are not the same, nor can they be’ (2006), then perhaps the fiction is intensified when the novelist — whose consciousness is already split between author and narrator — is the public figure. Do Carey’s appropriations of fictional characters, such as Magwitch in *Jack Maggs* (1997) or literary hoaxes in *My Life as a Fake* suggest this subconsciously, if not self-consciously?

‘What happens,’ asks Takolander, ‘as in the case of celebrities, when the performing self overwhelms the “meta-self” or the “real-self”? Are the potential pathological consequences of fame due less to losing touch with the “real-self,” which in all probability doesn’t exist, and more to do with an unnatural reification, a kind of death in life? The split between a public and a private self has the potential to develop into something neurotic’ (Takolander 2005: 312).²²

Carey’s defensive reactions to the questioning of his public persona by Turner and others — including allowing Ian McEwan to rebuke Australian audiences for not appreciating Carey’s stature as a ‘national writer’ (Steger 2008) indicate Takolander might be onto something²³ — notwithstanding the series of books from *Jack Maggs* (which fictionalised a fictional character) to *True History, My Life as a Fake, Theft* (2006) (centring around forgery and alluding to White’s *The Solid Mandala* [1966]) and *His Illegal Self* (2008).

As Turner notes, Carey resents suggestions, such as those by Karen Lamb (1992) that he had a very direct involvement in the construction of his public persona, and ‘critical reviews of his work for their potential to intervene in and disrupt this process of construction... [with] neither Carey nor his publishers entirely pleased with any enquiry into it.’ Carey’s statements about his books, even *Oscar and Lucinda*, seem intended to pre-empt ‘aberrant’ reviews (Turner 1993: 136).

²² Could this self-splitting be an explanation for why so many writers are so neurotic? Perhaps because, required to ventriloquise or imaginatively sympathise with the characters whose consciousnesses they depict, novelists’s consciousnesses are constantly split between the actual and imaginary, themselves and their fictional characters.

²³ As might his inclusion, along with six other “legends” of Australian literature, including Malouf, Keneally, Winton and one woman, Colleen McCullough, on a special issue of postage stamps in 2010.

But even if Australian literature is, as the controversies above attest, constantly being interrogated and extended, it still participates in the over-determination of the production and reception of Australian writing and its writers, and like White, Malouf, Winton or Carey, ‘nationalises’ some of them:

We are accustomed to TV personalities, sports stars, even some politicians, being “nationalised” — incorporated through media representations into the service of a narrow range of definitions of the Australian national character. We are less used to seeing this happen to literary figures. Rather, we have tended to see the writer as a scourge of such processes, indeed of all media-constructed identities. We think of the institutions most directly involved in these processes — the publishing industry, the education systems, funding bodies for the arts — and see the politics of production and reception which most determine our literary field as largely contained within these domains (Turner 1993: 138).

But they are not, and surely Turner is right to consider and interrogate the ways in which Carey’s changing relations to discourses and questions of Australianness in relation to his status and meaning as a ‘national’ author, especially given the way he (and other celebrated, celebrity authors) ‘maintain their success within the same processes of publicity and promotion’ (1998: 10). As Turner points out, Carey received more space in *Elle* magazine promoting *Oscar and Lucinda* than in the *Australian Book Review* (1993: 9). But is it any coincidence that the construction and marketing of Carey’s public persona was long centred around his work in advertising?

Novels: The New TV?

While Pollack contends that ‘a writer gives up control of [their] false document to his publisher, who gives up control to the bookstore owner, who shelves it where [they] want’ (2003), ‘the blurring of boundaries between fiction and nonfiction has been going on for some time’ (Eagleton quoted in Katwala 2001): not only during the memoir boom, but especially now. As LaCapra notes, the distinctions that define these genres and debates are futile anyway, for the seemingly “pure” genre,

determined through intellectual, institutional (and commercial) taxonomisation, ‘can never be quite “pure” enough, for it always includes a little of other genres’ (LaCapra 1987: 6), and, in any case, the distinction, at least for the purposes of cataloguing genres, between fact and fiction... is a modern one’ (Davis 1987: 20).

The novel is a form that has always been almost impossible to define and so ‘to say that the novel is doing this or that is always very difficult’ (Eagleton quoted in Katwala 2001). Responding to critics like Lawson, Franzen, Mordue and others, Donadio points out that while ‘to date, no work of fiction has perfectly captured our historical moment the way certain novels captured the Gilded Age, or the Weimar Republic, or the Cold War, it’s still early. Even Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace* years after the Napoleonic Wars’ (2005).

What would those critics standing over the novel’s deathbed make of such recent multi-generic or ontologically transgressive *books* as David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Roberto Bolaño’s *2666* (2008 [2004]), Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit From the Goon Squad* (2011), Sam Mills’ *The Quiddity of Will Self* (2012), Sheila Heti’s *How Should a Person Be?* (2011), Binet’s *HHhH* (2010), Richard House’s *The Kills* (2013), James Lever’s *Me Cheeta* (2008), Jake Arnott’s *House of Rumour* (2012) or Karl Ove Knausgård’s *Min Kamp (My Struggle)* (2012 [2009]) — let alone W. G. Sebald’s, Arnott’s or Wu Ming’s oeuvres — which ‘often blur the territory between these forms and fiction... sending our old generic orders into meltdown’ (Mordue 2003: 4)?

Could what Eagleton predicted, that ‘excitement and innovation may come from the novel moving closer to documentary’ (quoted in Katwala 2001) be taking place in ‘a contemporary literary movement that is impatient with conventional fiction-making...’ (Wood 2012b: 68) inspired by *Reality Hunger*, among its hallmarks the incorporation of ‘the seemingly unprocessed, unfiltered, uncensored, unprofessional; criticism as autobiography; self-reflexivity; a blurring to the point of invisibility of the utterly useless distinction between fiction and nonfiction’ (Shields 2010)?²⁴

Perhaps, expressing the profusion and diffusion of contemporary media and information technology, many of these books’ narratives (like *an allergy*’s) are constructed from real and fabricated references, false documents, media and genres

²⁴ Discovering that *an allergy* is similar to many of these popular and critically acclaimed works gives me some reassurance that its time may yet come. Well, that’s the hope of every writer, regardless of how long they have been labouring!

and interlinked narratives. Egan's novel (or short story collection), which includes different narrative viewpoints (including second-person) and tenses (including conditional) features a chapter (short story) presented as a PowerPoint slideshow. *2666*, also a series of self-contained but linked narratives features a much-praised centrepiece based on the infamous Ciudad Juárez serial killings with testimony and reports by the various police, private detectives, journalists and even a psychic attempting to solve the case, employing nonfictional techniques and discourses such as forensic reports to describe something imaginary but which also almost exactly mirrors actual events, what William Skidelsky called 'not fictionalised history... but... a kind of imaginative documentation of reality... [in] new territory between the real and the make-believe' (2009). Heti's 'novel from life' uses emails, transcribed conversations, even depicting portions as a play, with characters based on and named after the author and her real-life friends (although authorial self-insertion is as old as fiction: even the doughty Somerset Maugham regularly featured a first-person narrator called 'Mr Maugham' in his stories and novels, just as 'Sunil Badami' appears in *Local History*).

But no matter how 'real' fiction attempts to be, either by appropriations of non-fictional discourse, incursions into the historical record, or the classical realist novel's claims to truth-via-mimesis, in 'the power of description to somehow mutate into transcendent criticism' in the same way the media purports to be 'fair and balanced' or historians hold onto Rankean illusions of objectivity (Shivani 2011), this presents itself as a failure of realism. As Wood illustrates:

"Reality hunger" is an unwittingly apt phrase, because among the difficulties of this kind of storytelling is that one can never get enough reality into it... Realism is perpetually hungry, and keeps on trying new ways — every fifty years or so — to break into the larder. The writer who is seeking "life," who is trying to write "from life," is always unappeased, because no bound manuscript can ever be "real" enough (Wood 2012: 68–69).

We continue to crave reality, says Luc Santé, because we live in a time dominated by so much extra-literary fiction: politics, advertising, celebrity gossip, everything on television. 'But reality is a landscape that includes unreal features; being true to reality involves a certain amount of wavering between real and unreal' (Santé 2010). Indeed, as Anis Shivani argues (in a refreshingly contrary review of *Freedom*), 'realism today can be successful only to the extent that it constantly seeks to go

beyond realism: into the grotesque, the sensational and violent, the sentimental, narrative defined by language' (2011) — and beyond. As Santé remarks, if 'the paradoxes pile up as thick as the debris of history' we shouldn't be too surprised, 'since that debris is our reality' (Santé 2010).

Accordingly, many of these books move beyond the past or present, offering speculative histories in imaginary futures (such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [1948]) which fundamentally contradict our perceptions of accepted reality. Even more than history or historical fiction, speculative history explicitly acts as a commentary upon the present, using the future as a rubric. In *The House of Rumour*, Arnott further complicates and problematises this by inserting references to Katherine Burdekin's pseudonymous anti-fascist feminist 'future history' (depicting once-future events now past) *Swastika Night* (1937), which depicts the myths and lies surrounding the then-extant Third Reich's history, 700 years after its successful invasion of Britain. Combined with a narrative arc featuring Hess's disastrous secret flight to Scotland four years later, as well as Burdekin herself while she writes the novel, *House of Rumour* revels in its thrilling textual interplay between real, fictional and speculative histories, making one wonder (while appreciating the irony) if perhaps all history (no matter how academically rigorous or meticulously researched or imaginatively fictional) is speculative — unwarranted or otherwise.

A further theme many of these books share is the uncertainty and constant shifting of sexual identity: not only ambiguous sexualities but fluid genders. The woman whose body is discovered at the beginning of *The Quiddity of Will Self* has had plastic surgery to look like the male author; the writer Sam Mills at the end of it is revealed as a man, not the novel's female author; the mystery surrounding the transsexual Vita Lampada's death opens *House of Rumour*.

History features a nightclub, The Shamela Cabaret, based on Lee Gordon's Jewel Box travesty club (named after Fielding's satirical parody of *Pamela*, *Shamela* (1741), as well as being an acronym of shemale, similar to Vita Lampada's allusion to Sir Henry Shadbolt's poem, *Vitai Lampada* [1892]), with actual historical figures such as Gordon, Sammy Lee, Abe Saffron, Carmen and Carlotta; and *Local History*'s narrator's presumed gender and sexuality is similarly ambiguous.

This recalls Lasch's thesis that 'because technological progress seems to have reached a dangerous dead end, it has become imperative to identify an alternative to

the “patricentric” personality in the form of a narcissistic, Dionysian, or androgynous personality type... what some critics condemn as cultural and psychological regression looks to many feminists like a long overdue feminization of society’ (Lasch 1984: 244). By contrast, Franzen claims that ‘the current flourishing of novels by women and cultural minorities may in part represent a movement, in the face of a hyperkinetic televised reality’ (1996: 1947).²⁵

As in the 18th Century, so in the 21st. According to Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel*, the novel’s early readership was almost entirely female, and determined its content to a large degree (1957: 43). But while the notion that gained ground in the 19th Century that ‘popular’ (read ‘low-’ or ‘middle-brow’) culture was somehow associated with women (reflecting the on-going difficulties for women writers now, as then) as real, authentic culture remains masculine, the traditional exclusion of women from the realm of ‘high art’ takes on new connotations in wake of the Industrial Revolution and mass cultural commodification (Huysen 1987: 47).

Similarly, Carey, quoting de Tocqueville in his 2008 Sydney Writers’ Festival closing address, lamented those lost times when everyone wanted to read good books ‘in shearing sheds, mechanics’ institutes, lending libraries, and in the trenches’ asserting that ‘we have yet to grasp the fact that consuming cultural junk... is completely destructive of democracy,’ and our desire for the entertainment provided by mass culture over the presumed enlightenment offered by what he considers literature has made Australia a nation apathetic to important social issues (2008). Despite his allusions to ‘shearing sheds and the trenches’ it seems a highly elitist argument for democracy and disregards the extensive debates about identity and social issues surveyed above.

And what it reveals is not so much Carey’s concerns about the state of modern culture or democracy, nor his audience’s anxieties about their ethical integrity or authentic identity, but his anxieties about his relevance to it, as well as a possibly disingenuous attempt at validating his position as Helen D attempted by exploiting the very mechanisms that he proclaims to oppose or stand outside of (in her case,

²⁵ To be fair, even Franzen agrees that the extent to which the novel still has cultural appeal beyond the academy or as a presence in household conversations is the work of women: ‘Knowledgeable booksellers estimate that 70 per cent of all fiction is bought by women, so perhaps it’s no surprise that in recent years so many crossover novels, the good books that find an audience, have been written by women’ (1996: 47) such as Egan, Holmes or Hilary Mantel.

multiculturalism; in his, mass-media) — as well as a perfectly-pitched nod to his mainly middle-class audience's anxieties and intellectual snobbery (Takolander and McCooey 2004: 62), laughing at illiterate, ignorant Americans lining up to get their copies of Sarah Palin's *Going Rogue* (2009) signed as they lined up after his ticketed event to get their copies of *His Illegal Self* autographed.

Kathleen Fitzpatrick argues that the ostensible concern of writers like Franzen, DeLillo, Doctorow, Ruthven, Lasch, Foster Wallace, Carey and others, about the market's influence on art (as though they never existed before) and the mass-cultural diminishment of the self and its place in a wider community (mirroring the novel's place in culture itself), actually masks deeper fears about the declining power of white male authors and their place in once-dominant, in contemporary culture (similar to those more directly expressed by Carmen, and ironically similar to historians' fears about being 'knocked off' by 'fictive history'):

Television's democratizing reach is dangerous to the novelist in part because of the power it wields to level disparities in access to cultural products, exposing the writer to the scrutiny — and judgment — of others who may not be like-minded... and who might for that reason understand his universalizing view of the human condition to be an ideological construct conditioned on privilege (2006).

Franzen's dismissal of 'all the Marxists on college campuses' not making more of the resemblance 'that multiculturalism and the new politics of identity bear to corporate specialty-marketing-to the national sales apparatus that can target your tastes by your zip code and supply you with products appropriate to your demographics' (1996: 46) is, in light of the above-mentioned academic discussion, as wrong as his (or Carmen's or Ruthven's) assertions that 'political correctness' has marginalised privileged white men or that popular or mass culture are endangering 'literary' fiction or 'serious' reading — still less democracy.

As Nolan contends, 'what is at stake here... is a fantasy of white supremacy and white male entitlement to positions of cultural dominance' (2004: 134). What female writer can boast of being subjected to a neologism like 'Franzenfreude' ('to take pain in the multiple and copious reviews being showered on Jonathan Franzen [Weiner

2010]')?²⁶ Would there be a need for a Stella Prize or Women's Writing Prize if the Miles Franklin or Man Booker shortlists were so regularly dominated by women, much less Indigenous or ethnic ones?

As Turner points out, the 'nationalisation' of authors is 'unsurprisingly masculine,' citing the way the role is often attributed to male writers like White, Malouf or Carey rather than, say, Stead, Jolley or Hewett (1993: 135), and could be another possible reason why Carey has escaped the kind of serious censure over his historical novels as Grenville received.

Such arguments do not only reflect what Mark Davis calls the 'Nineties disease' but reveal a deep conservatism. Holding onto the idea that the often privileged people who speak out against 'political correctness' are somehow 'dissenters' (despite the fact that everyone's doing it and those who complain the loudest about it are rarely the victims of 'political incorrectnesses' such as racism, sexism or other discrimination), they protest (much too loudly) that they run the risk of being censored by (usually academic) 'thought police,' criticism of whose excesses (usually feminism or multiculturalism) risk them being victimised by conspiracies of 'organised opinion.' Yet this disregards their own prominent media profiles and the extensive critique and debate that goes on in academic circles regarding such issues (already extensively discussed), exploiting the fact that such academics are rarely given the same prominence or opportunities in the mainstream media to offer their, or any opposing views (1999: 8).

Given that most such 'mavericks' and 'dissenters' were supported by the Howard Government, (with Windschuttle appointed to the board of the National Museum of Australia and joining Christopher Pearson on the board of the ABC and Blainey joining Henderson on the National Curriculum Board to establish a standardised historical curriculum for high school students), who outside the far reaches of the

²⁶ One can only imagine the horror the apparently marginalised Franzen must have felt being called "America's Greatest Novelist" on the cover of *TIME*, after *Freedom* (2010) was declared 'a masterpiece of American fiction' (2010) in the *New York Times* a month before readers were permitted to purchase it. Was it the same revulsion he felt at *The Corrections* (2001) being stickered by Oprah's Book Club?

lunar right commentariat could ever accuse the mainstream Australian media of political correctness?²⁷

Indeed, questions about ‘who can speak,’ especially about ‘political correctness,’ are closely related to those issues of authenticity, identity and empathy raised in the controversies surrounding Carmen, Helen D and Grenville, as well as those of privilege described by Alcoff above, and fail to notice changes in public space, the way it operates, and that ‘others’ now demand to speak for themselves (Davis 1999: 9) — given that, like much mass-culture, there seem to be very few non-white characters in many novels, and they are usually non-speaking (as in *The Secret River*). Perhaps it is a fear of appropriation (which sits oddly with claims for the right to write about whomever you wish), or perhaps such fears are convenient retreats from contested territory.

Moreover, given that fiction, since Plato banished it from his Republic, has — despite its privilege in the academy and high art — always been a little suspect and has traded on its transgressiveness, these assertions of ‘white male alienation’ by writers such as Franzen, Carey and Foster Wallace as a validation of their ‘otherness’ (and thus their authority to speak and comment on the very same dominant society and culture they represent) can be seen as a kind of colonisation similar to Carmen’s. After all, a sense of alienation is not the same as the marginalisation suffered by others who are not white or male. This is reinforced by the somewhat disingenuous construction of Carey’s persona which emphasises his humble beginnings in Bacchus Marsh and his lack of interest in reading until he was eighteen — despite having gone

²⁷ Especially after the recent panel on the popular Seven Network breakfast magazine show *Sunrise* about sexism in the wake of then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s now famous “misogyny speech,” comprising such “experts” on sexism as presenter David Koch (who castigated breastfeeding mothers for not being “more discreet” in public); former NSW Treasurer Michael Costa (2001 “Ernie” award for sexism laureate); and reactionary “shock jock,” Alan Jones, whose countless attacks on Gillard need no further elaboration (*Sunrise* 12 June 2013). And, it should be added — not a single woman, despite the show boasting *three* female hosts.

to Geelong Grammar (Turner 1993: 133), further emphasised by his ‘status as both familiar Australian and exotic internationalist.’²⁸

By contrast to these authoritative assertions of otherness, in which cultural assumptions, perhaps inspired by the linguistic fallacy of the “I,” tell us that the normal self is a solid and singular quantity, Takolander points to ‘Jekyll and Hyde tales of split personalities or stories of amnesia circulate in popular culture as freak stories... the lack of a sole and stable identity appears variously as pathological, monstrous, and central to female identity’ (Takolander 2005: 310–311).

But all the women and freaks and amnesiacs and doppelgangers and imposters and actors in *an allergy*, either ‘afflicted’ by or acting according to their difference, and forced by such cultural assumptions and prejudices into ‘faking gender, ethnic affiliation, sexual orientation, race, and religion’ (Miller 148) are not merely a subversion of those cultural assumptions, nor even a refutation. Rather, they are a *celebration* of the reality of such identities and their right to exist, ‘at once plural and partial, sometimes... straddl[ing] two cultures; at other times, fall[ing] between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy’ (Rushdie 1991: 15). Or a reader.

Economies of Onymities

In his discussion of paratexts, Gérard Genette devised a taxonomy of what he called ‘onymity’ (1997: 39), or the act of signing a name to a text. The terms for not ascribing any name or using a false, assumed or invented authorial name are well known, and Genette discusses them in detail. To this, Ruthven adds ‘further refinements’ such as ‘orthonymity,’ or ascribing one’s actual name to a text is (a

²⁸ One of Carey’s first media profiles was titled ‘Author who hadn’t read a book before he turned 18’ (Brass 1980). In a *Paris Review* interview, he reiterated his ordinariness — pointing out his father’s lack of formal education, his mother being the daughter of a poor, country schoolteacher (‘I think she might have gone one year to a sort of posh school, but she would have been noticeably not well off’) (quoted in Jones 2006). As Lamb opines (1992: 5), Carey’s reshaping of the past and media personality of ‘ordinariness’ in marketing of his ‘non-elitist’ credentials contradicts the evidence of someone who slipped easily into his years in a school he described as ‘more about class than anything else.’ His best-selling “low brow” nemesis Courtenay was also accused of fictionalising his public persona and past (Cadzow 2012) — although tellingly, not in the pages of an academic treatise, but *Good Weekend*.

quaint notion, given the preceding discussion) (2004: 102–104). But of particular interest here are ‘allonymity’ and ‘mononymity.’

Allonymity is, despite its apparent similarities, not the same as pseudonymity, and is most commonly associated with literary hoaxing, being the attribution of a text to someone else in order to improve its authority or opportunity to be noticed, such as a middle-aged white male attributing a semi-autobiographical novel to an Aboriginal woman, or a strange young woman taking on an ethnic identity to present an entirely fictional book as an autobiographical ‘faction.’ It is also very similar to ghost-writing.

Takolander makes an analogy between ghosts and literary fakes (2005). And yet the ghost-written memoir — most often ‘as told to’ or ‘written with’ by celebrities of only marginally less obscurity than the authors of all those ‘nobody memoirs’ (Adams 2002) so popular during the memoir boom — is a fake memoir not considered in the same light as *Forbidden Love* or *Sweet Time*. Take the case of *Codename: Iago* (2007), the story of John Friedrich, the-then head of the National Safety Council, revealed before publication to be an imposter, with no identification or qualifications (which *Local History* draws upon, given that like Boo’s father, Friedrich’s family had no idea of his real identity). Friedrich’s memoir was ‘told to’ a then-unpublished writer (who’d go on to write a book about a forger whose soul is in a constant state of reinvention), one Richard Flanagan. In a postscript after Friedrich’s suicide, Flanagan mused (in a way he might in a novel’s foreword):

I can vouch for the veracity of none of it. But my job was not to check facts, but only to echo John’s voice in its many and varied manifestations. This book is neither the full story nor the only story about John Friedrich... But if I believe none of [his] account, nor would I dismiss any of it as being only lies... If [he] did upon a number of occasions build a fantastic world based on nothing concrete, if he was a person who felt himself to be in disintegration and battled this sensation by continually reinventing himself, then how does he differ from the rest of us, in a world which encourages us to be in constant flight from our own true past, our own people, and the places of our childhood (1991: 238–239)?

A fascinating subversion of this phenomenon — and of Pollack’s contention about a book rarely being shelved under autobiography and fiction — was the initially allonymous *Me Cheeta* (2008), presented as the scandalous autobiography of the

chimpanzee from Johnny Weismuller's Tarzan films.²⁹ On the face of it, a sly and witty subversion of both the bitchy celebrity memoir and the old 'infinite monkey theorem' (that states if x number of monkeys type randomly y hours a day for z years, they might reproduce the works of Shakespeare or a Borgesian *biblioteca total*), the 'autobiography' (as it was paratextually tagged on the cover) features entirely real-world figures, including Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Errol Flynn, Rex Harrison, Katherine Hepburn, Weismuller — and of course, Cheeta himself — as well as a substantial index, with photos of Cheeta and many of the people mentioned in the book. Lending a further air of veracity, Chapter 8 is omitted, 'on legal advice' (2008: 222).

Was it a hoax? How could it be? What reader would seriously believe a chimpanzee, no matter how famous or intelligent, could write a book, much less 'tell it to' a ghost-writer? It is imperative we suspend our disbelief that it could. As Pollack says, 'false document gains its power not from conflating reality and art, but from creating those rare moments in which the reader can enjoy the delicious frisson of believing a document might be real while considering the consequences of accepting it as false' (Pollack 2003).

Mononymity occurs when several people agree to write under a common name, such as McAuley and Stuart submitting poems to *Angry Penguins* as 'Ern Malley.' More pertinent is 'Wu Ming,' a name drawn from the Chinese word for 'anonymous' and 'five people,' often used by Chinese dissidents. It is an allonymous collective in which five members collaborate on metafictional self-reflexive revisionist historical novels, not only to experiment with new forms of identity and authorship, but with mythopoesis, which is:

The social process of constructing myths, by which we do not mean "false stories," we mean stories that are told and shared, re-told and manipulated, by a vast and multifarious community, stories that may give... some sense of continuity between what we do and what other people did in the past. A tradition. In Latin the verb *tradere* simply meant "to hand down something," it did not entail any narrow-mindedness, conservatism or forced respect for the past (Wu Ming 2002).

²⁹ When I purchased my copy from the QV branch of Borders in Melbourne in 2008, it was in *Autobiography and Memoir* — a fact so incongruously funny I never forgot it.

While its collective members are all well known in Italy, Wu Ming renounce celebrity: although they do extensive book tours, they refuse to be photographed on the basis that ‘once the writer becomes a face that’s separate and alienated, it’s a cannibalistic jumble: that face appears everywhere, almost always out of context... I become a “character,” a stopgap used to quickly fill a page layout’ (quoted in Bertante et al 2007). Moreover, although their historical novels — written with the pacy, page-turning energy and visceral detail of so-called ‘trade’ or ‘genre’ fiction featuring outlandish and thrilling plots based on historical events and figures — are critically acclaimed bestsellers around the world, they are offered free under ‘copyleft,’ allowing anyone to copy, distribute or perform the work, as well as making it available for others to make derivative works. As they say, ‘We don’t do literature in the strict sense of the term. “Pure” literature makes us feel claustrophobic. It’s a narrow space inhabited by self-referential cliques. We are “storytellers by every means necessary”’ (quoted in Bertante et al 2007).

The diffident E. M. Forster once defended anonymity on a number of grounds, including on the basis that unlike the signature, which belongs to the ‘surface personality’ (or celebrity, as we would call it today), literature tries to be unsigned. But mainly because if readers thoroughly engaged with a novel and read it truly deeply, it allowed them to forget the author’s name and their own (1925: 592–593).

an allergy is replete with imposters and aliases: fake doctors, hijras and transvestites, religious frauds, criminal aliases and stage names. At its heart, the incredible stories presented in *Case Histories* seem magic-realist (even if all but one are based on actual medical conditions) and the father’s eventual exposure in *Local History* as not only not being a doctor but a man without a name (or many) stands at its heart as much as the ambiguity about Boo’s identity and gender.

Perhaps these imposters are refractions of my own uncertain identity — not my place in a post-colonial society or anything as complicated or clichéd as that — but my very name. The ‘speculation that “Badami’s” name was an assumed nom-de-plume, only reinforcing the fraud whoever he was had perpetrated’ is *true*: a few years ago I discovered that our family name was, despite all the recorded history behind it, made up. My grandfather, tired of being homonymously confused with other Raos, had changed it, taking it from the small temple town from whence family legend said we’d originated. In India, you can know everything about someone from

their name: their religion, their caste, their mother tongue. It is as much a locator as a designator. 'Badami' often draws a blank.

I often wish I had started publishing under a pen name, like one of my favourite writers, Eric Blair did. Perhaps a non-ethnic name might have offered me some kind of freedom from perceptions or performances of authenticity — much less whatever a nom-de-plume once did for Blair or Walter Lehmann or it does Wu Ming or Robert Galbraith, the recently exposed pseudonym used by J. K. Rowling. I am all too aware of what a former agent called my 'USP' (or 'unique selling point'): NESB ('non English-speaking background'), hybridised identity, 'exotic but familiar' etc etc *etc*. Not forgetting the 'pitch' behind the novel: written after being hospitalised for six months, written over 13 years, lost, re-written after winning a quiz show etc etc *etc*... Is it any wonder I feel even more fragmented by all that demographication?

Writers' names are brand names now: not just bestsellers like Rowling, Tom Clancy or James Patterson whose names are writ large over the top of their books' titles, but Carey and Franzen and Winton too. Or, in the case of Clancy and Patterson, *actual* brands, involving 'multimedia publishing packages' and with their names on books written by others. While Patterson, former director of J. Walter Thompson advertising (who pioneered television advertising for books) cites the example of other creative (albeit entirely musical) collaborations, such as Gilbert and Sullivan and Lennon and McCartney, he asserts that 'there is a lot to be said for collaboration and it should be seen as just another way to do things as it is in other forms of writing, such as for television, where it is standard practice' (quoted in Wroe 2013) (even as publishing, as Keith Gessen's e-book *The Birth of a Book* [2011] attests, is inherently collaborative).

But apart from the ideals and the identity, what is the difference, exactly, between Patterson and Wu Ming? Much less than between Patterson and Carey? Or me?

Good Artists, Bad Artists, Dead Authors

Just as author's 'winks to the knowing reader' may go unseen, so too embedded, unattributed allusions may go either unnoticed or misinterpreted.

an allergy is replete with literary allusions and references, some explicitly attributed, and others embedded, including references to Robert Gray's poem *Diptych*, which inspired *an allergy*; and T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, which has informed it (similar to the many similar allusions to modernist poetry in *My Life as a Fake*). The scene where Boo takes her father's ashes to the Secret Castle is directly quoted from the poem (with Gray's permission).

With the advent of new technologies that have 'only multiplied the possibilities of duplication and recombination... the act of "copying" and copyright [like information] is impossible anymore to regulate or even describe (Lethe 2007: 60–64) the apocryphal, much- and incorrectly attributed maxim 'bad artists copy; great artists steal'³⁰ has taken on even greater meaning.

As Constable points out, 'forgers attribute their own work to someone else and plagiarists pass off someone else's work as their own, but both intend to deceive (1996: 3).

In the wake of her exposure, Helen D was accused of plagiarism, with a number of passages and imagery in *The Hand* apparently lifted from a number of authors and sources, both fictional and historical. Most tellingly, one scene was the same as a scene in D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1981) describing the infamous massacre of Ukrainian Jews at Babi Yar (which Thomas was himself accused of plagiarising

³⁰ The first recorded instance of the phrase, according to the pseudonymous academic "Garson O'Toole" of the widely respected Quote Investigator blog (<http://bit.ly/16tQHbB>: 3 March 2013, accessed 11 July 2013), was in 'Imitators and Plagiarists' by W. H. Davenport Adams in the June 1892 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Vol. 272, pp 627–628), in which he offered a 'modest canon': 'That great poets imitate and improve, whereas small ones steal and spoil.'

Eliot appropriated Davenport Adams's "canon" and, interchanging it closer to the commonly accepted expression, argued that 'One of the surest of tests is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion' (1920: 114), proving, one supposes, the truth of the proposition.

from Anatoly Kuznetov's 'documentary fiction' *Babi Yar* [1970]), featuring a participant in the atrocity called Demidenko.³¹

Was her adoption of the name an unseen wink to White? Given other examples of plagiarism — including, ironically, pseudonymously plagiarising a story by Patrick Cook, Kitson's husband — subsequent legal defences that her actions were 'post-modern' and that 'fiction need not acknowledge its sources in the same way historiographical texts should,' seem disingenuous. As Sue Vice argues, 'plagiarism is seen to be the logical outcome of inauthenticity because the writer has no other access to what [they] are trying portray' (2000: 143).

It also presents a problem for historical novelists, caught in a double bind: if they draw on unattributed historical material, they lay themselves open to charges of plagiarism; if they do not, they may be accused of inaccuracy. According to Vice, there are two ways out of this trap: 'either signal very clearly where the historical material is taken from, or blend it with the rest of the novelistic material' (2000: 146).

Just as at the height of the memoir boom, fake memoir exploded, at the height of the 'reality hunger' boom, plagiarism has. Not only journalists, such as Jayson Blair, Johann Hari or Jonah Lehrer, stood accused, but novelists — from the young Kaavya Viswanathan and Q. R. Markham, whose entire oeuvre was substantially plagiarised from dozens of sources, to leading lights of the literary establishment such as Andrew Motion, A.S Byatt and McEwan.

When the young German writer Helene Hegemann was accused of plagiarising a number of sources for her prize-winning novel *Axolotl Roadkill* (2010), instead of apologising, she asserted (channelling Eliot) that she hadn't stolen it but presented it in a completely different and unique context, simply neglecting to properly acknowledge it. Besides, she replied, 'there's no such thing as originality anyway, just authenticity' (quoted in Connolly 2012).³²

³¹ Although Keneally generously forgave Helen D her appropriation of his work, as Matthew Rimmer points out, he perhaps did so in a spirit of asking forgiveness for his own experience of being accused of plagiarism, when he was sued for plagiarising Bill Strutton's book *Island of Terrible Friends* (1962) in *Season in Purgatory* (1976) (reaching an out of court settlement with Strutton and sharing royalties from the book) (2000: 165).

³² Although as Laura Miller pointed out, she probably took the phrase from Jim Jarmusch, 'who probably took it from someone else.'

In an almost novelistic coincidence, the revelations about Hegemann's plagiarism/mashup/remix/appropriation broke at the moment *Reality Hunger*, which called for the same disregard was published (being composed of entirely plagiarised quotations like Jonathon Lethem's much better essay, 'The Ecstasy of Influence' [2007]).³³

In such a light, though, given the number of sources Markham plagiarised, his book might be considered a collage like *Reality Hunger*. As he confessed, 'it felt very much like putting an elaborate puzzle together' (quoted in Widdicombe 2011). But unlike Shields' non-fiction 'collage-essay,' Markham's novel was pulped along with his contract.

What *is* the difference between inspiration and appropriation, allusion and plagiarism? It seems that like the lines between fact and fiction, forgeries and hoaxes, is not just thin or blurry, it's permeable. As Luc Santé says, 'originality, if there can ever be any such thing, will inevitably entail borrowing, conscious and otherwise' (2010).

Writers have been raiding the larder of other writers' work as long as stories have been told, from Shakespeare taking from Chaucer and Plutarch (McCrum notes he took 4,144 lines out of 6,033 in Parts I–III of Henry VI verbatim or in paraphrase from other authors [2010]) to that great artist, Eliot, stealing from everyone in *The Wasteland*. Today, the comedy-horror mashups of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) or *Android Karenina* (2009), which insert appropriate zombie or android references to the original text — outsell the original works.

Today, readers appropriate the characters of books or television shows or actual people, such as singers or (usually) boy-band members they love, in erotic fan-fiction, writing lurid fantasies of sexual encounters between them. While Linda Jaivin expresses 'moral discomfort' over the way fan fiction writers appropriate characters or disregard copyright, perhaps such concerns are 'a generational thing' (2013: 48–49), in which the anxiety of influence has, indeed, become ecstatic. Still, such direct interaction could be considered its own kind of mythopoesis, with ordinary people

³³ While Lehrer was forced to resign for "self-plagiarising" and fabricating quotes by Bob Dylan in his non-fiction book *Imagine* (2012), Lethem makes much of Dylan's own 'minstrel-boy appropriating' of film dialogue, literature, Confederate poetry, Shakespeare and more. As Lethem notes, Dylan has never refused a request for a sample.

appropriating the ‘canon’ — albeit a ‘low brow’ one — and making it their own sort of folklore.

But what ethical and creative issues distinguish Hegemann’s ‘re-presentation’ of other people’s work or *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* (2012) to Peter Carey’s of Magwitch in *Jack Maggs* (1997)? Much less Sam Mills’s appropriation or depiction of ‘Will Self’ and his work in *Quiddity*? Echoing Constable’s point about deception lying not just in the author’s intentions, but sometimes the receiver’s, Hutcheon notes that while on one hand we are dealing with *authorial* intent and with the historical issue of sources and influences; on the other, it is a question of *reader* interpretation whereby visible sources become signs of plagiarism, and influences yield to ‘intertextual’ echoes (1986: 232). As with a hoax, as with any text, it all depends on the reader.

History as the Novel, the Novel as History

While Alex Miller declares he knows of ‘no novelist who claims to write history and of no historian who claims to write novels’ (2006), not only have historical novelists, such as Keneally, attempted to write academic history (most recently with his *Australians* trilogy [2009–] with no recorded censure), but historians, such as Mortimer, David, Alison Weir and Simon Sebag Montefiore in the UK; Jane Kamensky, Jill Lapore, Thomas Fleming and Shelby Foote in the US — and, in Australia, Anna Haebich or Hsu-Ming Teo — have turned to writing fiction.³⁴ In 2011, the University of London’s Institute of Historical Research convened an on-line conference, ‘Novel Approaches,’ about the relationship between academic history and historical fiction, asking a number of questions this exegesis has attempted to explore — as well as offering advice to historians on how to write historical fiction. It seems that if the contemporary novelist has become a popular historian, the contemporary historian wants to be a novelist.

³⁴ Interestingly, though, while other historians have written historical fiction, Teo’s novels, while containing an historical component, are contemporary social-realist explorations of personal and racial identity.

While self-admitted purists like Clendinnen might argue against such ‘Scheherazade poses,’ Mortimer argues that history, whether through its representation in academic history or depiction in historical fiction, allows us to see the human condition in a deeper way, especially when contrasting the past with the present, making us aware that ‘humanity has far greater depth than appears from a knowledge of the here and now... amplified beyond what we personally may experience in the modern world’ (Mortimer 2011: 8).

McKenna essentially agrees with Mortimer’s position, but says that the crucial difference is that ‘history relies on distance while fiction constantly tries to break that distance down, to create the illusion that the reader is there, and therefore knows what the past is like.’ According to Wood, ‘the distance seems as important as the proximity, and the inventing novelist may negotiate that doubleness more effectively than the passionate documentarian’ (2011).

Perhaps. However, all agree that the past offers a means of refracting and viewing the present more clearly, in which ‘every historical judgement refers to present needs and situations’ (Doctorow 2006). For Johnson, the goal of ‘literary historical fiction’ is not to show readers exactly what life was like in a particular historical period (although it may have that effect). Rather, such ‘literary historical fiction’ focuses on the plot, characters and theme, which despite being set in the past, emphasises themes that pertain to the present (2002) (even as historical novelists, like historians, must make every effort to avoid ‘presentism,’ or the imposition of contemporary values or viewpoints on the past — and so in *Local History*, depicting and giving voice to abhorrent racist attitudes in post-White Australia (especially as they reflect the growing racism of post-Howard times).

The problem, as alluded to above, is we have no viable working definition what makes the fictional depiction of the past ‘historical fiction,’ much less any text ‘literary.’ The past is forever retreating from us, even as it is constantly re-intruding into the present, wave after wave in an ocean of memory and imagination. How much time must pass before a novel is considered historical fiction? A hundred years? Fifty? Ten? One? While readers born in the 1980s might consider a depiction of the Dismissal historical, others who remember it vividly might disagree. Is *The Harp in the South*, full of historical detail vital to a contemporary novelist’s research, despite being written for a contemporaneous audience, historical? What too, of *an allergy*,

which, when it was first commenced in 1993 (!), could have been considered a direct commentary on the then-present, given Boo's death at the age of 31 (paralleling the age of other characters in *History* and *His Story* at the time of their disappearance or apotheosis) but which now might be considered historical, given that that then-present is even more distant than the historical past (1975) it depicts?

The Historical Novels Review has a 'working definition' of historical fiction as being set fifty years or more in the past, and one which in which the author writes from research rather than personal experience (Johnson 2002), leading to the conclusion that 'all novels are historical, but some are more historical than others.'

While McKenna concedes that 'to mark out the unique advantages of history is not to deny the historical insights of fiction' (2006: 108), it is not only fiction that can offer such insights. Indeed, despite many novels about the Australian experience of the Great War, such as Stephen Daisley's *Traitor* (2011) or Chris Womersley's *Bereft* (2011), which continue to perpetuate the myth of the 'digger' — what novel has yet dealt with the issues and revelations of historical works like Peter Stanley's *Bad Characters* (2010) or Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds's *What's Wrong With Anzac?* (2010), which not only interrogate the myth, but comprehensively debunk it?

As Alan Atkinson writes, 'Australian history writing is on the move. For a long time, the stories of our origins were completely subordinate to our history as a whole, particularly the long legacy of Aboriginal dispossession. But our historians are beginning to recognise that origins in themselves are free of history; it is only their aftermath that makes them historically significant...' (2009: 66–68).

But just as the work of historical novelists has benefited from some aspects of historical scholarship, there is no reason why historical writing cannot benefit from some aspects of fictional rhetoric, if only to engage more readers with the issues being discussed. 'Most historians suffer from prosopagnosia: face blindness,' confesses Kamensky, describing how she and her co-author Lapore had written a 'goodly' number of pages before it dawned on them that they had yet to describe their first-person narrators (2011: 2). David, Mortimer and Kamensky all call, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, for making historical writing more sensory. While David questions if history writing might benefit or suffer from an historian's foray into fiction, Kamensky and Mortimer feel strongly that as long as it stays close to the evidence, 'why not write scholarly history dramatically and thereby bring scholarship

to tens of thousands of readers? Why not be inventive? Why not write fiction’ (Mortimer 2012: 8)?

New narrative developments force a re-reading and re-vision of previously read or accepted truths, something *an allergy* seeks to explore and interrogate, juxtaposing different genres and seeing how they and their methodological constraints or discursive boundaries overlap, inform or challenge each other. McHale calls this ‘history as the novel, the novel as history...’ In such postmodernist revisionist historical fiction, history and fiction exchange places, history becoming ‘fictional’ and fiction becoming ‘true’ history — ‘and the “real” world seems to get lost in the shuffle’ (McHale 1987: 201). But this is precisely the question McHale (and I) believe such fiction is designed to raise: ‘real, compared to what’ (1987: 202)?

Laurent Binet’s *HHhH* is ostensibly a historical fictional account of the assassination of Nazi leader Reinhard Heydrich by Czechoslovakian partisans. Declaring his ‘long-held disgust for “realistic” novels’ (2012: 36), Binet is apparently transparent about how he will depict the story, explaining that he won’t invent characters or dialogue, embellish details, speculate on his subjects’ psyches, or manipulate the narrative with ‘cheap literary effects’ (2012: 254). Indeed, at those moments he does, he draws attention to it, or disavows it in a following chapter. For Binet, any fictional portrayal or depiction of a person, whether invented or real, is ‘to reduce [them] to the ranks of a vulgar character and [their] actions to... [the] vulgar plausibility... of literature’ (3–4; 99)

On one level, *HHhH* is not so much a book about Heydrich’s assassination as an exegesis about the problems of writing a historical narrative, and of the writer’s struggle to present the unadorned facts within the mechanisms and artifices of narrative: ‘an essay about our relation to historical fact and the responsibilities of a work of fiction that sets out to dramatise real events’ (Ley 2012).

But while Ley proposes that Binet’s ‘personalised narrative brings the raw facts to life by constantly drawing attention to the limits of the knowable, gesturing beyond those limits towards the blank space at the centre of his story, without presuming to occupy that space. He appeals to the reader’s imagination at the very point at which a fictionalised specificity could only fail’ (2012), many other critics — and this reader — wonder if the story itself is enriched by its author’s struggles, or constant reminders of truth and unreliability? Indeed, isn’t this as fictive a strategy as

Blaikie's, or any other conventional novelist? As Wood points out, for all Binet's proclamations and disavowals, 'there is invention and artifice on every page... some of it is transparent and confessed, but most of it is hidden and unconfessed...' (2012).

While like *Razor HHHH* is not a traditional historiographical discourse, if fidelity to verifiable sources is as important as Binet keeps reminding us, surely the most ethical approach would have been one like Clendinnen's and writing an academic history with verifiable references?

As Cohn notes, the process that transforms a historian's archival sources is very different to the way a novelist adapts their sources (whether autobiographical, anecdotal or historical) into fiction. While the former is highly constrained and controlled, subject to the historian's reference and justification and the reader's scrutiny, the latter is free, remaining tacit, or when mentioned, assumed to be spurious or unreliable, its origins often unknown, even to the novelist themselves (1990: 791).

Binet asserts he is writing an 'infranovel' (2012: 241), saying 'to write a novel with just one level, without a metafictional dimension, wouldn't interest me very much' (quoted in Fox 2012), although he does not elaborate further on what 'infranovel' means. Yet for all this Binet disingenuously argues that *HHhH*'s narrator is 'absolutely identical' to its narrator, expressing 'annoyance' with the 'distinction between the author and narrator' (quoted in Fox 2012). Although *HHhH*'s rhetorical and meta-textual flourishes appear postmodern, Binet's fervent respect for "reality" and representing the past "as it actually was" is actually Rankean. 'Yet his suspicion of fiction does not extend to the possible fictionality of the historical record... and he indeed does revitalise history — by fictionalising it.' (Wood 2012: 76).

While Margaret Atwood devised rigorous guidelines for herself and her depiction of the past, 'such as not altering any solid facts' (1998: 1515), 'Sharon Gould's' *Quadrant* hoax was 'studded with false science, logical leaps, outrageous claims and a mixture of genuine and bogus footnotes' (Simons 2009). Which sounds like *History* in particular, and *an allergy* in general! But like *Alias Grace*, *an allergy* is 'very much a novel rather than a documentary' (1998: 1515).

2666's fictitious academic papers, books, forensic reports and newspaper articles; the footnotes in Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007); or the footnotes, endnotes, citations and quotes in the accompanying appendix *History*

‘symbolise the fictional truth of these stories equally well, because [there] is no formal difference between a metalinguistic reading of a text about accepted facts or a figment of the author’s imagination’ (Riffaterre 1990: xvii).

Cohn’s reluctance to declare an unproveable negative regarding the generic anomalousness of fictional narratives adhering to historical discourse passing for historiographical texts was invoked by Stephen Muecke’s remarks on *History* that:

The creative extract... is a long way from historical fiction and somewhat closer to history in its form. Who is this narrator? The status of the footnote as aesthetic device is not yet in place; it is purely referential at the moment, signalling documentary/historical functions. (2010)

To which I cannot help responding with unalloyed delight that despite it being clearly paratextually tagged as a creative extract, it should still be read as history. It proves Pollack’s observation about the strongest form of false document actually fooling the reader, even as *History*’s presentation and juxtaposition with other genres within *an allergy* seeks to raise precisely such critical doubts.

If footnotes signify ‘the central narrative of any good history: the struggle of the historian intent on recuperation to make the gnomic, refractory remnants of past sensibilities speak’ (Clendinnen 2005), like the footnotes in *Oscar Wao* or George MacDonald Fraser’s *The Flashman Papers* (1969–2005) (which appropriate the villain of *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* [1857]), *History*’s footnotes serve an *intrinsically* aesthetic and ideological purpose. If the mission of the best historians and novelists is to reveal those ‘unrecorded lives and experiences that leave little or no textual record’ (Miller 2006), then what better way to reveal the way they are often marginalised to history’s footnotes than for a novelist pretending to be an anonymous historian putting them there, in contravention of both their supposed ‘proper’ discursive place or referential function?

Although *History* is written, like any false document, in a style as close to the text or discourse it seeks to emulate or simulate — such as never intruding into ‘the secret pulses of its characters’ affective lives’ beyond that which might be documented in ‘the evidence’; or acknowledging the unreliability of such ‘evidence’ or sources and the unverifiable gaps in the record — it cannot truly hide its fictionality. It employs many of Riffaterre’s fictional tropes, including humour, satire, ironic narratorial intrusion and antomasic names incompatible with verisimilitude (such as Martha

Anderson-Weill-Connew-Moran-Moore-Withers-Furphy, the counterfeiter Shanghai Charlie Tan or, in *Local History*, Sister Gloria Munday, her brother Barry and the undertakers N and X Hulme). It also uses other self-reflexive techniques such as textual play (including extensive punning, such as ‘Ozymandias/Aussie man me arse’), historical re-conceptualisation (in which known historical details are deliberately falsified or suppressed histories of real or imagined marginalised groups rediscovered), direct address and other devices that reveal, through ‘its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs... the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past’ (Hutcheon 1988: 5).

The perceptive reader will note that there are no dates in both *History* and *Local History*. This is deliberate: not only for the artistic freedom to merge different periods, people and events (more freely and hopefully less contentiously than Grenville did with the old man and the spade), nor even to emphasise the narratives’ unreliability, but to place them in no period (even if both firmly located in each of the places they are set and evoked by myriad cultural and historical references). Still, as such an (a)historical picaresque novel, *an allergy* seeks not so much to represent or depict any particular place, period or person accurately, but rather to evoke a sense, within a consistent and synonymously consistent narrative logos, of *believability* despite such inconsistencies, anachronisms and ungrammaticalities, forcing readers to constantly ask (despite the constant avowals of unreliability): ‘what’s real? And compared to what?’

Literary Originals

In the end, ‘no amount of theoretical flourishes and new coinings of genre can compensate readers for the lack of a good story and vivid characters’ (Masson 2004: 11). Malcolm Knox proposes a definition of literary: ‘Foster Wallace said popular culture is what tells us what we already know. By contrast, what we might call “original” culture seeks to tell us what we don’t know. When we’re talking about fiction, “original” is a more useful word than “literary”’ (2006). Marjorie Garber goes further, suggesting that the very things that make literature seem so true — and so

literary — are the very rhetorical devices identified above: vernacular, literary allusion, reminders of narrative unreliability, relevance to the present — and most of all, not just the absence of answers or determinate meanings or resolution, but a tendency to outwit or confound such expectations (2011: 259–260) (such as the true identity of the father or nature of the Alleged Panther in *Local History*).

That sounds like a fitting motherhood statement for *an allergy*, which seeks in an original way to prompt readers to ask questions not only about reality — whatever that may be, refracted through the past — but about themselves — whoever they may be, reflected by the lively, engaging characters who inhabit the story’s depiction of that past.

As Crace argues, ‘if serious writers want to reach a bigger audience then they should make more effort to write books people want to read. This isn’t dumbing down, it’s a simple matter of having something to say and saying it well... a good novel should be readable. Why would an author not want to be understood? It should also have a good storyline, accurate dialogue, and be edited. And above all, the book should have a big idea: something to say about the world beyond the basics of the story’ (2010). He believes readers can find this in so-called ‘genre novels’ by authors like John Le Carré, Stieg Larsson or Peter Temple.

Is there any better endorsement of this view than *Truth* (2009) winning the ‘literary’ Miles Franklin Award or Sulari Gentill’s *A Few Right Thinking Men* (2011) winning the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize (Australasia/Pacific)? It is interesting that many readers will get an impression of 1930s Australia from popular historically-based detective fiction like Kerry Greenwood’s *Phryne Fisher Mysteries* (1989—) or Gentill’s *Rowland Sinclair Series* (2011—) which fictionally depict actual historical figures, such as Francis de Groot, Jack Lang, Krishnamurti, Annie Besant, Cary Grant and others, unless they turn to the much-neglected fiction of the time.

Even ostensibly ‘literary’ books such as *Cloud Atlas*, *Goon Squad*, *House of Rumour* or Michael Chabon’s *The Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000) incorporate the ‘middle-brow’ and mass-cultural: from science fiction to thriller pastiche to comic books to rock music, with Egan citing *The Sopranos* as an inspiration (quoted in Maran 2010). As Wu Ming declare of their historical detective thrillers: ‘It’s popular fiction. We try to bridge the gap. Our books are readable on two levels: as complex political allegories, and as pulp fiction or adventure novels. So

people can enjoy our novels even without caring about the message we're trying to convey' (quoted in Tayler 2009).

What is interesting is the way that this new(ish) historical(ish) fiction has moved away from detailed descriptions of customs or politics or even problematic and potentially anachronistic depictions of vernacular to incorporating examples of pop culture, serving in a way that classical or Biblical allusions might have for previous generations: as Rushdie noted of writing *Midnight's Children* (1980), 'I found myself remembering... advertisements, film-posters, the neon Jeep sign on Marine Drive, toothpaste ads... and old songs... The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance... fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities' (1992: 12).

While *an allergy* does incorporate elements of vernacular, particularly in dialogue in *History*, *Local History* and *Case Histories*, there is greater emphasis on cultural memory and allusion: whether in song and film in *History* or television and snack foods in *Local History*, each also reflecting the thematic concerns of each narrative — ephemeral Dionysian performance in *History*, which is centred around theatre, dance, music, gambling and the Sydney Push; or the quotidian delights of a 1970s childhood in *Local History* contain specific reference to colour and gender, such as references to *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*, *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, *Love Thy Neighbour*, Choo Choo Bars, lamingtons, White Knight chocolate bars, David Bowie, 'Molly' Meldrum, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *No. 96*, starring Carlotta. Just as Park could not have written for any other audience than the one that surrounded her (or Dante or Chaucer or Shakespeare or Dickens theirs) so too no historical novelist can ever write for the past or posterity: only the present.

In fact, one might ask, when established fin-de-siècle novelists such as Rushdie, suggest that television has overtaken the novel 'as the best way of widely communicating ideas and stories' (quoted in Thorpe 2011), what explains the apparent refusal of writers like Franzen or Carey to engage with the realities of this multi-media age? Especially when they feature on the cover of *TIME* or *Elle*? Perhaps the same subjective ideological aesthetics that determine whether art is 'high-' or 'low brow' or a novel literary or not are at work in deciding whether such allusions are nobly numinous or vulgarly kitsch.

From the Books Pages to the Front Page

Australian literature, like its history, is haunted by ghosts, from Fisher's in Campbelltown to Ern's (via Bob McCorkle) in *Fake* (and Potter's in *Local History*). Although Delia Falconer writes so eloquently of Sydney, the first frontier, she could be writing of Australia's uncertain history and its unreliable literature, containing only 'traces of past life:'

It is not so much full of ghosts, as absences. It echoes... without ancient stories to help. For the language and stories of the Eora that made sense of the place are largely gone, and were ignored from the outset. There is a sense [it] is not so much filled with ghosts as dogged by hauntedness itself, haunted philosophically; its ghostliness is almost depthless, as if – so quick and thorough has its forgetting been – there is a tremor in the bedrock of reality itself (2011: 22–23).

These are the ghosts of our colonial past — not only those of dispossession and the denial of what Manne calls 'a culture of forgetting' (2009) but the nation's anxieties about its identity and place in the world, expressed through that old canard, the cultural cringe. As Peter Goodall argues, 'the continued existence of English is like the class war carried on by other means' (1995: 150), as the state of modern Australian literary studies — as opposed to the celebrity that foreign (or foreign-resident) writers enjoy — attests.

One might say (as Turner, Takolander and McCooey do), given Carey and Franzen's awareness or manipulation of the mechanisms that market their books and public personae, that:

literary fakes reveal how authorial identities operate in the public sphere as commodified authenticity and as markers of an ethical aesthetic, in association with which reader identities are constructed and displayed... The revelation of a literary hoax exposes the commercial operation of authors selling a commodity and thereby exposes the ideological spuriousness of the "authenticity fix" and "ethical fix" looked for in the identities and literature of ethnic or victim writers (Takolander and McCooey 2004: 58–63).

As Nolan and Dawson point out, ‘the ways such hoaxes [have] played out have much to tell us about the management of anxiety surrounding cultural and racial identity’ (2004: xiii), with the issues at the heart of media controversies about political correctness centred around debates over whether identity is a stable essence or a mutable, contingent construct (van Toorn 2000: 42).

Franzen asserts that ‘it’s often argued that the country’s literary culture is *healthier* for having disconnected from mainstream culture’ (1996: 47), with literature having become commodified into a mass-manufactured capitalist product, leaving it unable to exert the same influence it once did throughout society, ‘its authenticity no longer able to secure universal respect, its place taken by ‘mass media’ such as mainstream pop music, TV soaps, the blockbuster movie, and others’ (Schwarz 1989: 254).

But such a position is, as Davis points out, evidence of the old (monocultural) logic of centralized meaning at work when culture was vertically integrated and high culture was an end in itself, making available speaking positions with in-built, readily identifiable clout. Culture, though, is increasingly horizontally integrated, and appeals to meaning that rely on a high-low culture hierarchy are struggling for relevance in an era notable for the sheer number and variety of groups who claim to produce distinctive cultural meaning, as well as for the increasing variety of forums used (Davis 1999: 10).

In such an environment, perhaps the hoax offers a way for those outside the academy or intelligentsia to engage with the issues. Hoaxes are front page news. But as Turner points out, ‘this does not always automatically trivialise or reduce the cultural importance of literary debate’ and its prominence has come about ‘precisely because of the absorption of the literary into the mass-mediated public sphere’ with ‘the debate over the Demidenko novel anything but a coterie affair: arguably the high point occurred on the ABC’s *The 7.30 Report* when Helen D challenged Henderson’s right to speak on behalf of the Jewish community’ (1998: 11).

Readers who may not have even considered the history behind *The Secret River* might now investigate it further, given the controversy and debate surrounding it since ‘for some, historical fiction is a way into reading history proper’ (David 2010). If literary culture is — despite its relative decline to other media — still a part of a pervasive commodified mass culture by which weakened, dependent narcissistic

selves, split into marketable demographics, measure themselves, then, following Baudrillard's simulacral procession, literary hoaxes, fakes and forgeries are fiction's logical conclusion.

And if fiction offers a re-examination of the dominant discursive or political hegemony, the language of power, then perhaps, literary hoaxes offer a similar re-examination of these hegemonies by a wider audience that may not always have access to the discussions of literary and academic criticism, and in a wider sphere such discussions cannot often ordinarily reach.

Peter Craven remarked in the wake of Helen D's exposure, '*The Hand* is infinitely less interesting than the questions it throws up' (1996), however I do not believe that the profusion of books, newspaper articles, electronic media commentary and academic discussion regarding the issues surrounding it are 'alarming' or 'hilarious' symbols of the void around which our cultural life supposedly flitters.

Rather than destroying the thing it set out to simulate, Helen D's book — like Ern Malley and his poems — has inspired a larger body of work which has had a far greater impact on Australian society, culture and public discourse seeking to confront the issues surrounding class, ethnicity, ideology, history and identity. raised, than they ever might have if their ruses had not been exposed.

As Caterson notes: in cultural and political terms, hoaxes... may have a positive effect, and some do intentionally or unintentionally expose sham and hypocrisy and false values in general' (2009: 56). Even Heiss admits that 'the positive side of the Leon Carmen scandal and other literary frauds is that they force Aboriginal writers to generate strategies that encourage Aboriginal people to write and be published' (1998).

What is interesting is that the media now provides the forum and opportunity (as it did with the publication of *Harp*) to discuss moral, aesthetic and political issues in ways that were once the province of the novel itself.

While mass culture has marginalised the so-called 'public intellectual' and while, despite the plethora of media outlets and means belies the concentration of control into even larger, less diverse hegemonies, it has allowed ordinary readers to participate in — or at least view — the debate as it's played out in the mainstream media and internet, in a way that they might not be able to without a JSTOR account.

Hoaxes are, at their heart, lies presented as truth, much like fiction (even if fiction is — or should be — more upfront about it). We do not expect scripted ‘reality’ television shows like *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* (2007–), *Being Lara Bingle* (2012) or *The Shire* (2012) to be real; or historical films, such as *Kokoda* (2006), *Balibo* (2009), *Snowtown* (2011) (much less *Underbelly: Razor*) to be historically or mimetically accurate — so why the fuss about historical fiction, which is, as the genre itself declares, *fictional*?

Alain de Botton once observed in his allegorical novel *The Romantic Movement* (1996) (pertinently subtitled *Sex, Shopping and the Novel*) the distinction between two ways of reading: ‘reading to escape yourself’ and ‘reading to find yourself’ (1996: 192–196). Davis and Lasch might argue both approaches are fundamentally narcissistic, predicated on the self, and one’s relation to it, rather than to the world outside a book’s pages. It is a strange paradox that so many narcissistic selves seek identification in memoir and self-help, written by people narcissistic enough to believe that their depiction of their lives is somehow enlightening or inspiring or that to live well, we must believe in ourselves. What more fertile ground for imposture and hoax than such relentless, frenetic demographic and psychic fragmentation?

Geoff Dyer’s question, ‘how can you know anything about literature if all you’ve done is read books’ (2009: 102)? prompts the further question: how can literature tell you anything about the world, much less your self, if all you know of either is from books?

One might respond thus: just as a book — like any text, whether fiction or history or a bit of both — composed and edited by ideology, cannot offer a complete and thus entirely accurate view of the world, it cannot provide us with a complete or entirely accurate view or reflection of ourselves. How can it, when, texts (and those who write them) do not ‘merely record,’ but interpret, reorganise, compose and manipulate patterns, omitting suppressed truths and, when the pattern is not to be found in the evidence, find it anyway, making the leap from what is recorded to what might be imagined to join the random, unconnected stuff of life into a cohesive narrative?

It might be argued that it is not *books* that can tell us anything about ourselves, but rather, *our responses* and *reactions* to them that do. If our defences are ‘fingerprints of our personality’ (Davis 1990: 11), then the way we enact these defences to read, understand and believe a text may reveal more about us, than any text might, no

matter how realistic it seems or convincing it feels: after all, as Riffaterre, Rabinowitz and Winterowd point out, these only rest on the linguistic verisimilitude we perceive: it is only as real as we believe it to be, and that depends on what we know as much as who we are — or think we are.

The paradox is that, as Miller or Lasch might argue, we seek that reality or authenticity through the specific narratives of Others, into which we can read anything we wish. We believe what we want to believe: ‘falseness lies not in the word or the object but in the intention of the creator, or occasionally, of the receiver’ (Constable 1996: 3).

That is, the perceived truth ‘revealed’ by the lies fiction (or *any* text) tells is expressed by our response to it: if we don’t believe it, it won’t feel real. *Ipsa facto*, if it doesn’t feel real, we won’t believe it. And both are intrinsically linked to our senses of who we believe we are, which influences the way we perceive the world — even if that perception is distorted by our narcissistic selves’ dependence on the ways in which capitalist mass culture co-opts the way they seek definition or identification through that niche-marketed commodification.

Conclusion

The idea that any discourse can ‘represent’ or ‘tell’ or ‘uncover’ the past — much less the truth — is at odds with much contemporary literary and historiographical theory. As Lionel Gossman says, history and fiction should conceive of their work as ‘exploration, testing, creation of new meanings rather than as disclosure or revelation of meanings already “there”’ (1978: 38–39). Just as I have discovered in this degree and my career that writing cannot be taught but must be learnt, the truest ‘suppressed’ truth cannot be revealed by the writer: it can only be realised by the reader, whatever it is they perceive.

Whatever Conrad’s lofty and admirable ambitions ‘to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe,’ no cohesive narrative (least of all a supposedly ‘unifying’ one) can ever ‘bring to light the truth manifold and one’: what makes narrative cohesive are its edits, its omissions, its reorganisations, its compositions, its

judgments and interpretations, no matter how we may try not to succumb to ‘the impulse to resolve dissonances, to smooth out the cracks, to seek order where there is none’ (McKenna 2006: 109). As Richard Jenkins asserts, the very act of writing narrative is ‘fictionalising’ (1999: 92).

Just as a reader who believed that *The Secret River*’s fictionalised events ‘really’ happened would be considered naïve, no reader really expects that lies can tell the truth, no matter how true they seem. As established, literature’s believability and its fakery exist because of its rhetoric: the effect of fictional truth is not reliant on the ‘facts,’ for while ‘facts are the images of history, images are the data of fiction’ (Doctorow 1983: 24).

But even if it does not refer to or rely on ‘reality’ no text stands on its own: whatever its textual effects, its context affects all the people literature is crowded with: the people who produce it, the people who respond to it, and the people depicted within it. ‘Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing’ (Conrad 1905: 106). So is history itself.

Many critics recognise that good historical writing requires as much imagination and creativity as fiction. When McKenna talks of the essence of good literary history leaving spaces open for readers to interpret and wonder and imagine and discover, a history that admits the past cannot be recreated or relived, its ambiguity giving such history its life, power and mystery (2006: 109), he could be talking of any great writing. And as his work and the work of other passionate and dedicated historians like Clendinnen, Pybus, Reynolds, Lake, Karskens and others prove, both ‘the historian and the novelist work to deconstruct the aggregate fictions of their societies’ (Doctorow 2006). There is no need to elevate fiction or history to the top of the ladder, as if one is the superior art, or one has superior insight. In fact, I would suggest *all* narrative is literature, which can, and *must* give the lie to official facts by questioning them, even as it employs the trappings of believability to do so.

The interactions and overlaps between fiction and history – ‘history as the novel, the novel as history’ — in which historians are employing more fictive rhetoric and novelists engaging in more scholarly research – do not suggest invasion but *reconciliation*: a return to the relationship they once shared before the Rankean split. This should not be seen as a corruption of either but an opportunity for imagining new possibilities — and for including new readers.

Howard's proclamation of the history– and culture wars and the 'unifying narrative' proved that it is not historians and novelists who are natural rivals, but writers and politicians. 'Both fight for the same territory. And literature is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth' (Rushdie 1992: 14).

'The struggle of man against power,' Milan Kundera says, 'is the struggle of memory against forgetting' (2003: 129). And in Australia, 'a country still so uncertain and divided about its past... we need to resist any tendency to... snuggle up to a mythical version' (McKenna 2006: 109–110) or an assimilative one, in which differences are smothered as 'Others' are even more discriminated against and marginalised.

This is the 'unifying narrative': history 'as written by elected or nonelected political leaders, super-patriots, dirty tricksters, xenophobes, and all other exemplars of shrewdly reductive thinking' (Doctorow 2006). Arguably, the 'unifying narrative' leaves out far more than it includes, excising 'dark areas' from the borders of our history, denigrating any inclusion or criticism contradicting its proponents' own ideological fictions about Australia or fabrications of its history as a 'black armband' view of our national story, unable to see any other perspective from behind such 'white blindfolds.'

Although McKenna claims that 'unlike fiction, history is more threatening politically because it can't be pushed behind the curtain of invention or make-believe' (2006: 107), the controversies and debates surrounding *The Hand* or *The Secret River* were as powerful and political as those surrounding *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* and the history– and culture wars in general.

Which is why fiction is — and must be — transgressive: the first great novel, *Don Quixote*, was a satirical picaresque. Indeed, the claims of white male novelists like Franzen, DeLillo, Foster Wallace, Doctorow, Carey and Carmen of their 'alienation' from the very mass-culture which has so privileged them, can be seen as seeking to validate their speaking positions by appropriating the very otherness of those who actually *have* been marginalised by that mass-cultural hegemony (in Carmen's case, fraudulently and directly). Their criticisms of multiculturalism and mass– and 'low-brow' culture are reminiscent of those made by early critics of the novel itself such as the Puritans; for them, the novel, consisting of lies and novelty, was morally suspect (Davis 1987: 11). Thomas Carlyle bemoaned literature's popularisation, arguing that

the ‘prurient appetites of the millions’ resulted in ‘making bad worse — for every bad book begets an appetite for reading a worse one’ (1840: 408). Graham Greene complained about of popular novels muddying thought (Greene 2008: 153). Who was it who said ‘history repeats itself?’³⁵

If it might be said that writers are readers long before they put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), they are readers of the most engaged kind. Writers on the whole are inspired to write not because they first loved writing as much as they first loved reading. I cannot deny my debt to Carey in particular, given how much *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda* have inspired *an allergy*.

However, as critically engaged readers, we *should* question the authority or motivations of anyone — whether politician, historian, commentator or *especially* novelist — who claim to tell the truth or to tell us how or why or what to read, or write, or believe.

What makes literature so great — and so necessary — is its democracy, especially now. Not just ‘because the structure of its market is relatively democratic (novelists make a living one book at a time, bringing pleasure to large audiences)’ (Franzen 2002: 109), but because, in an age of political spin, lobbying, vested interests, rent-seeking and media bias, the best literature offers inclusiveness: a panoply and multiplicity of voices and perspectives. But this must include its readers and allow them to make their own interpretations.

No book, whether history, fiction, memoir — or whatever genre publishers’ marketing departments devise in between — is written for the people it depicts, especially those of the past: they can never read it. Neither should it be written for posterity: we cannot know if it will ever be read then. A book is written for the ideal audience that we can imagine because we are among them: the people of the present. Whether what we write is refracted through the rubric of some speculative future or some equally imagined past, it is written for them, offering a means for us to review the present we are in in a different light.

³⁵ Among others (including Marx and Bernard Shaw), Conrad did in *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906): ‘History repeats itself,’ he wrote presciently of such contemporary anxieties, ‘but the special call of an art which has passed away is never reproduced. It is as utterly gone out of the world as the song of a destroyed wild bird’ (47).

While literature seems continually at threat of being excluded from public discourse or relevance since Plato famously exiled it from his Republic — condemned, perhaps, in the way dissenting opinions to the ‘unifying narrative’ are as ‘unAustralian’ — it is by including these different and dissenting voices, in the way *an allergy* seeks to do by depicting often forgotten lives in often disregarded histories in a variety of genres, discourses and subjective viewpoints — that can make it not only more democratic or relevant, but interesting and engaging. What Eagleton says of literary theory applies to literature: it is shaped by a democratic impulse rather than an elitist one, and when it does lapse into the turgidly unreadable, it is being untrue to its own historical roots (2003: viii). It seems paradoxical to write an essay on why we should read more history or fiction. Surely only writing histories and novels we want to read can convince us to do so. If literature wants us to believe, it is only so we can keep reading, and in reading, start asking.

Carey addresses the textual defences, ideological criticisms, uncertainties over authorial authority and anxieties about cultural identity surrounding literary hoaxes in *Fake*, although in a way that could be read as a defence of ‘real’ literature and ‘a salve to ‘middle brow’ anxieties about these issues... representing it as a force that escapes the hoaxer’s devious intentions (Takolander and McCooey 2004: 64). However, literary hoaxes *are* literature in a way analogous to the identity constructions of Helen D and Peter C, in that hoaxes are not so much the disreputable Other of ‘genuine’ literature as its demystified and disreputable Self, in which we reveal what we value in what we reject (Ruthven 2004: 4).

Robert Manne might have believed that the Demidenko hoax demonstrated that Australia remained uncivilized, but I agree with Takolander and McCooey that it arguably showed a desire to prove itself civilized through a display of cosmopolitanism and tolerance in order to distinguish itself from traditional colonial views or cultural-tinge stereotypes of cultural void (Takolander and McCooey 2004: 63). The panoply of questions, vigorous debates and different views it and other hoaxes left in their wakes forced us to re-assess once-comfortably held assumptions or exposed repressed prejudices in ways that Howard, declaring that the wars he’d started to be ‘over,’ did not wish us to discuss. But if fiction or history want to reclaim this contested territory and be part of this discussion, especially in an increasingly crowded public sphere, perhaps they need to include their readers and speak to them rather than remonstrating with them.

This also raises the thorny problem of speaking for others, a right claimed by Franzen or Carmen (and supported by Ruthven and others), and relinquished by Keneally and Grenville in their depictions of Aboriginal characters. ‘The whole thing is really a dazzling illusion empty of all perception,’ says Roth’s fictional alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman:

Is everyone to go off and lock the door and sit secluded like the lonely writers do, summoning people out of words and then proposing that these word people are closer to the real thing than the real people that we mangle with our ignorance every day? The fact remains that getting people right is not what living is all about. It’s getting them wrong’ (1997: 35).

Again, as always, it comes back to intention. Rather than focusing on an appropriative desire for mastery, or a right to speak for others, any narrative must address the question, ‘will it enable the empowerment of oppressed peoples’ (Alcoff 1991: 29)? Although my intentions — filtered through what I hope are the authorial and narrative audiences’ senses of irony and judgment — are framed by this (as were Keneally and Grenville’s), how can I, the writer, of all people, say if they will?

Returning to McHale’s question as to why would a novelist play with fire in this way, I would invoke Rushdie:

A book is not justified by its author’s worthiness to write it, but by the quality of what has been written. Literature is not in the business of copyrighting certain themes for certain groups... the real risks of any artist are taken in the work, in pushing the work to the limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what it is possible to think. Books become good when they go to this edge and risk falling over it—when they endanger the artist by reason of what he has, or has not, artistically dared (1992: 12).

This is not the same as purporting to tell the truth (like Grenville or Carey) or appropriating someone else’s identity (like Carmen or Demidenko). And while it is imaginative, it cannot be empathy. We can try to empathise with real people, but even that takes imagination.

Great literature is and always will be stories about people, no matter what form it takes, whether historical, fictional, or a combination of both; whether it is delivered in a first edition or an e-book, or via history or fiction. We cannot truly empathise with

‘word people’ but imagining we can might enable us to see a way to empathise more with the real people around us.

We want more than anything to believe, and as readers, we readily suspend our disbelief. Davis hypothesises that novel reading began when the authority of religion began to wane: ‘Where religion mediated between the self and the world, now the novel took up that role’ (1987: 5). Perhaps this is because fiction, like religion, asks you to believe lies that tell the truth about the human condition, what it means to be human, and how to be compassionate.

But unlike religion, belief in literature must be a sceptical faith, rather than a blind one, questioning not just about what might be depicted, or said, but asking what might need to be asked. ‘Reverence is fatal to literature’ says Forster, making a plea for it not to be a sermon, but a conversation, not speaking abstractly to art itself, but directly to audiences (1925: 595). But as Wood rightly states, a proper scepticism about fiction’s truth should not become a despair about its possibilities (2012). Nor should the dynamics and contentions of other debates necessarily apply to new ones.

If Australia’s engaged citizens should not fetishise or mythologise its history or political leaders, it is doubly true that neither should engaged readers fetishise or idolise writers. Just as identifying ourselves by the books we buy is delusional, so too is identifying too closely with the name on the cover. As the pseudonymous follies of famous writers and literary hoaxers prove, while we must acknowledge a book’s place within a wider cultural and historical context, our first engagement is always with the text alone, even if the wider context must inform our deeper understanding.

Baby Argyle, one of *History*’s protagonists, will discover (in chapters beyond the appendix that follows):

The greatest lesson he would have learnt from Mysterioso or Erdnase (assuming he was actually taught by either) would not have been the mechanics of materialisation or the enigma of disappearance, but this: *the audience want to believe the illusion*. They don’t want to see the hidden wires and trick latches, the trap doors and false bottoms. Although they *pretend* to be trying to see how it’s done, they don’t *really* want to see: if they did, they’d be more enraged by the revelation than they ever might be delighted by the deception. They *want* to be amazed, they *want* their card picked, they *want* the rabbit to appear and the dove to vanish, and they don’t care *how* it’s done. They *want* to suspend their disbelief, just as that plucky, pretty assistant is

levitated up high into the gods, her skirt riding up on the wire, before she's chopped to bits and delighted screams. They don't want to *see* the sleights of hand or the sly winks: they want to *believe* the magic. They *pretend* to try and see how it's done, and the *real* magician *pretends* to let them pretend.

All magicians are sceptics at heart, even as they believe in magic's wonder (Gopnik 2008: 62). Perhaps the real magic is not showing our audience what we do to make the illusion *seem* so believably real, nor even making them wonder how we do it, but making them ask *why* they want to believe as much as they do.

Postscript: Truth and Fiction, Life and Art

It is often said that, just as ‘life imitates art’ (Wilde 2010 [1891]: 22), ‘truth is stranger than fiction.’ Mark Twain, with whom the phrase is most connected, coined the expression in *Following the Equator* (1897), the travelogue of his world reading tour in which, having visited Australia, he famously quipped that :

Australian history is almost always picturesque; indeed, it is so curious and strange, that it is itself the chiefest novelty the country has to offer, and so it pushes the other novelties into second and third place. It does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies. And all of a fresh new sort, no mouldy old stale ones. It is full of surprises, and adventures, and incongruities, and contradictions, and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened (1925 [1897]: 150).³⁶

The expression even more ironic is that Twain attributed them to *Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar*, a fictitious text drawn from his novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson (Those Extraordinary Twins)* (1894) about mistaken racial identity and possibly murderous Siamese twins in a fictional Missouri frontier town. What makes the attributions even stranger is that neither the calendar nor the maxims from it that preface each chapter was *even in the novel* — Twain wrote them to promote it on his reading tour. Thus, this observation about truth being stranger than fiction was based on the fictional musings of a fictional character on a text *so* fictional (or metafictional) it did not even exist in the novel in which its author appeared. (That Twain referred in the following chapter to the Tichborne claimant, later the loose basis for Patrick White's *The Tichborne Affair* (1979) needs no further elaboration to spoil the joke.)

Although Davis and Lasch would contend such a hypothesis narcissistic, one cannot help but notice what Park would call similar ‘poetic iron[ies] of fate’ (1973: 13): discovering in the course of my research that the first acknowledged novelist in Australia, Henry Savery, author of *Quintus Servinton* [1830]) was transported to Hobart for forgery (Miller 1958: 22). Or that the Sharon Gould hoax was published in

³⁶ Like Ern, I'd read in books that art — much less literary theory — was not easy; and this was to be the original opening epigram for *an allergy* until, like that black swan of trespass, I discovered Carey had already used it for *Illywhacker* (as well as Frank Moorhouse, Michael Wilding, George Papaellinas and others).

a magazine founded by one of the Ern Malley hoaxers. Or that it was in response to the publication in *Angry Penguins* of Rexroth's poetry that McAuley and Stewart were moved to devise and execute their long-reaching hoax (Katsoulis 2009: 125).

Even *an allergy* has its own such fateful, poetic ironies: not least the rewriting from memory a novel so inextricably entwined with history, memory, imagination, believability and fallacy. *Local History* was deeply influenced by Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* and Gray's *Diptych* — I based the framing structure upon the former, and the parents' characters and relationship on Gray's own parents, as described in the poem, including and embedding extensive allusions and references to both within the text. Both novel and poem are set on the NSW Far North Coast. Although Carey's references to Bellingen, a small town about half an hour's drive from Coffs Harbour, are obvious, Gray's poem offered no such clues to its location.

Some ten years after first drafting *an allergy* I discovered that the woman who would become my wife grew up on a small property outside Coffs Harbour called Orangetrees, where her mother's ashes are scattered. In redrafting, I often wondered whether to name the Fulbright property after April's childhood home.

Around this time, Gray published his acclaimed memoir, *The Land I Came Through Last* (2008), which revealed even further poetic ironies in his father's secret past. Given I'd been friends with Gray for over 20 years, but had never known about this secret history when I first started writing *an allergy* — much less that he, like April, had grown up in Coffs Harbour — made the parallels even more astounding.

I rang Gray to congratulate him on the book, and happened to mention that like him, my wife had grown up in Coffs Harbour.

'Oh, no,' he replied in his usual quiet way. 'I grew up outside Coffs.'

Where?

'A little property called Orangetrees.'

Appendix I: *History*

1. That Tram Route and A Closing Night Boot

Of all the things we now know — and these are far outnumbered by all the things we still don't — the story of his arrival on the Gap Express is almost apocryphal. Although the story, with which many would already be familiar, might be considered yet another of the myths surrounding him, there is some evidence to support it. Reports appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Smith's Weekly*, *The Sun* and of course, **Truth**:

Passengers on the Watson's Bay Line were surprised by the arrival of a baby boy born yesterday at 11.11am at Circular Quay, near the corner of George and Argyle Streets. As conductor Nicolas Conway, of 22 Wonderland Avenue, Tamarama, who delivered the infant, reported, the mother, Mrs Martha Anderson, an entertainer of 32a Neild Avenue, Paddington, cried out to stop the tram, before going into labour near the rear exit. According to Mr Conway, she denied she was pregnant, even during birth, insisting she 'might have just had bit too much butterscotch up at Aladdin's Cave.'¹

Mother and child, admitted as 'Baby Argyle,' are doing well, and the Minister for Railways, Hon. Mr Ratcliffe announced he was delighted to issue 'Baby Argyle,' who arrived without crying, with a Golden Ticket, entitling him to free public transport for life.¹

¹ Along with Repin's Coffee Inns, Cahill's themed restaurants and tea rooms were a feature of Sydney's social scene for years, in those days when the family dressed up in their Sunday best to 'go to town.' Its ice cream cake and caramel sauce were a delectable treat for generations of good boys and girls taken there for afternoon tea after 'the shops.' The main tea rooms, on two levels next to the old Theatre Royal at 51 Castlereagh Street, were 'warm and inviting, with timber furniture and wall panelling, and the golden glow of carefully planned lighting. An attractive display of chocolates and other Cahill's products in the shop-window helped to entice customers from the street.' Other restaurants were themed accordingly: the Tudor Room in Martin Place featured medieval fittings; the Italia Romantica in the Strand Arcade was adorned with cherubs and white columns; the Dutch Village on Park Street featured windmills; the African Safariland on William Street stuffed animals. The Aladdin's Cave on Elizabeth Street, where Martha confused overindulgence with labour pains, featured harem curtains and Sinbad's Bar, where one could enjoy an 'Ali Baba' cocktail, a variation of the then-popular Aviation with blue curaçao substituted for crème de violette.

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [1]: Check Truth style

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [2]: Man on the Bondi tram: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_on_the_Bondi_tram

Sunil Badami 29/7/13 10:38 PM

Comment [3]: When did Cosy close? Other tea room name? Black and White Milk Bar — 1929 or 1932?

Sunil Badami 15/8/13 11:47 AM

Comment [4]: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ley-thomas-john-7191>

Sunil Badami 29/7/13 10:38 PM

Comment [5]: Confirm — Ley Federal by 1925

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [6]: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Ley

Sunil Badami 13/2/13 2:09 PM

Deleted: Minister of Industry and Public Transport, Mr T J Ley Minister

The Minister's extraordinary generosity was a sign of things to come, with a rash of heavily-pregnant women riding the trams, hoping for the same Golden Ticket, which was withdrawn by Ratcliffe's conservative successor after the *twelfth* such unexpected arrival delivered triplets.

Already the inconsistencies that marked the Andersons' lives are evident in a small but telling detail — or lack thereof. Who *was* Mr Anderson, the absent father listed on Baby Argyle's birth certificate, (and, more to the point, *where* was he)? Although much of Baby Argyle's life (as his still-unsolved end) was swaddled in secrecy, it was the search for the answer to this question — *who his father really was* — that would define him, and his own idea of who he was. As for all of us.

But there's no doubt that despite her unpreparedness for motherhood, the otherwise cunctatious Martha was his mother from that moment.² In those days, illegitimate and aboriginal children (regardless of their legitimacy) were whisked away from their dazed mothers soon after birth, no questions asked nor any explanation given, a practice that continued up until recently. She might have left him to the care of a relative, as Dulcie Deamer did with her surviving children, or else abandoned him to an orphans' asylum, as so many other troupers did, but 'one peek at him and how could I? Even before the head matron opened her mouth, I cried blue bloody murder, and I've never left go of him since.'ⁱⁱ

Martha loved recounting the story of the scene in the maternity wards that evening: how Baby Argyle was the only baby tended to by the cooing sisters,

² Funnily enough, though, there was no word Martha hated more — and no-one appreciated the irony less — that it was the one word most punters (and *Truth* readers) most associated with her. She tried and tried without success to teach her son to say her name, but it always, *always* came out the same bloody way. *Mother*. She would wince when she heard it, and it must have been the worst kind of torture to hear it whispered at her most nights for the rest of her life. *Mother. The password*. You had to go to the back of the house, knock on the door, and whisper loudly — but not too loudly — 'Is — 'Is Mother home?' And wincing, Mother would hand you what you came for. Even being shortened to Mum's didn't make it less painful for her, and you didn't say it in front of her or to her out of 'business hours' if you wanted to keep the rest of your teeth. Mum, indeed, was the word.

while more ‘respectably born’ infants were left neglected, turning the pockets of their lungs out, cold and unfed:

Mobs kept coming over to have a look at him, even when they were visiting their own sick relatives, she wrote. One of the doctors on rounds even said he wished *he’d* delivered him.ⁱⁱⁱ

Although no wise men were reported bearing gifts in the wards that night, and Martha’s reliability as a witness is well known, her account does correlate with contemporary reports, and it might have been this that allowed her to hold onto him (that , and the absent Mr Anderson, whereabouts unknown). Luckily for most of those respectable infants, it was probably the last time they’d be cold or unfed, unlike other more unfortunate, ‘less respectable’ children born that day, who’d be sent swaddled in rags to the crowded slums beyond the Domain and Hyde Park. When they were discharged a few days later, Martha did not bother changing the details on the birth certificate. As she said of her son’s unusual name:

‘Apparently my head was round towards the Argyle Street sign, and I kept crying *Argyle, Argyle, Argyle...* Actually, it might have just been *aargh, aargh I’ll, aargh I’ll... burst!*’ she says, her deep, smoky laugh billowing over the harbour-side flat her doting son bought for her, filled with the mementoes, memories and her prized antique armoire.

‘Imagine if I’d been looking the other way up George Street? I like *George* Anderson as a name, it’s a good, respectable name, and I’ve known a few good Georges. But who can forget a handle like Argyle Anderson, *darling?*’^{iv}

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM
Comment [7]: Converted to orgone chamber

One can only imagine now how his story — or history, for that matter — might have been different if she'd gone into labour on Elizabeth Street.³

There is as much mystery surrounding his Martha. The flamboyant and extravagant society figure she became passed into local legend, even when the details and reasons for her notoriety are lost now. She was so infamous that she became the subject of a well-known limerick — composed anonymously, of course:

*Queen of the Rocks was Martha A
Didn't wait for sunshine to make hay
When they said "You're a swell!"
She replied "Go to hell!"
With a swing of her bag on the way.⁴*

There's no doubt of the impact Martha would once make on Sydney society, both 'respectable' and 'otherwise.' But then in Sydney, as always, the distance between the two was never that far apart: you could see the way they were connected by the tram upon which Baby Argyle was born wound its way from the Quay through the seedier lanes of East Sydney and past the

³ Still, despite being known — as much as a man as private and even secretive as he could be known — by that unforgettable handle for much of his childhood, Baby Argyle became Arthur — or more affectionately, Artie, among his countless business associates, acquaintances and contacts — upon adulthood. Although the explanation is, like much of the mythology surrounding him, probably apocryphal, it's said that the popular expression 'He doesn't know if he's Arthur or Martha' — describing the subject's confusion and possible sexual predilections — was based on the much less catchy 'He doesn't know if he's Arthur or Martha's *Baby Argyle*,' later corrupted into the more familiar phrase (Partridge & Beale, *The Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8th Edition, Routledge, London, 387).

However, had he been abandoned, as many infants in those days were — in tram stations, departments stores, on the doors of women's hospitals or police stations — he may have had an even more colourful moniker: the indomitable policewoman, Lilian Armfield, herself childless, was fond of bestowing foundlings with eccentric names: one left squalling in the foyer of a well-known theatre was christened 'Royal Castlereagh.'

⁴ There were rumours that Martha, never backward in coming forward, composed it herself. If they're true, it stands as yet another example of her self-starting attitude to most things. However, it's also been suggested that the original version did not dub Martha so much a queen as a 'quean' (or 'woman of dubious morality,' for which then-Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam had to apologise in Federal Parliament to then-Treasurer Sir Billy McMahon).

Sunil Badami Murdamir..., 4/6/13 1:00 PM
Comment [8]: Tosca?

Sunil Badami 12/8/13 12:50 AM
Comment [9]: Deamer, 91:

*A writer of books, Dulcie Deamer,
At high kicks and splits was a screamer —
When they said 'You're a swell,'
She replied, 'Go to hell!
I'm only a poor wandering dreamer.'*

*Cecily, the so romantic young poetess, with the
unruly, bobbed red-gold hair, had read one or
two of my novels and was so moved by them,
poor child, that she wrote these high-flown
lines as tribute to me:*

*She walks along the dim, unheeded ways,
That feet untouched by stardust never tread,
And on the harp of all creation plays
The long forgotten music of the dead.*

slums of Paddington, before wending further to the enlightened heights up near Macquarie's Lighthouse (taking a route, which, apart from the many overseas flights he would later undertake, followed the intimate geography of his life). The same high and mighty wowsers railing against personal vices for the public good often paid the most for theirs, which of course, they liked kept on the hush (and for which they paid a little extra).

Whatever pretensions Sydney society might have had to respectability, there was no escaping its convict roots, founded on 'rum, sodomy and the lash.'⁵ Whether it was sly-grog sold in Riley Street, women sold on Palmer Street, or property sold on Pitt Street, everybody knew all about it — and for the right price, looked the other way (or chucked in for a 'drink'⁶). The fortunes of many prominent MPs, Police Commissioners, magistrates and a Premier or two were made on such furtive 'investments' — and the rumoured £2,000 Martha later kept in the famous black patent-leather Fine Bag she always carried with her, which could not have been entirely for 'fines' (leading to the obvious question: what would a law-abiding citizen need to keep two grand in fine money for anyway?).

Which is perhaps why Argyle Anderson's high-flying rise was never much hampered by the persistent whispers swirling round his Martha. After all, wouldn't a bootlegger's son one day become the President of the United States? And an SP bookie⁷ the Premier of New South Wales? Least of all in a city which, according to its great chronicler, Ruth Park, was christened:

⁵ Although apocryphally attributed to Sir Winston Churchill in reference to the Royal Navy, it was reported by his personal secretary Anthony Montague-Brown that Churchill attested he did not say it, although he wished he had; and it has been speculated by one of Churchill's biographers that it may be derived — via Harold Nicholson's diaries and Sir Peter Gretton's memoirs — from an old Navy saying that went along the lines of 'Ashore, it's wine, women and song; aboard it's rum, bum and bacca.' (Partridge & Beale, *The Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8th Edition, Routledge, London, 997)

⁶ Bribe

⁷ Starting Price, or illegal off-course, bookmaker

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [10]: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rum_Sodomy_%26_the_Lash

Also includes And the Band Sang Waltzing Matilda

for a maggot-headed politician, a perfect rattle-brain, who happened to be Home Secretary when Captain Philip brought his live lumber into harbour. Yet the name attests to the poetic irony of fate. The convict settlement was meant to be called 'Albion' but this never took. Instead, we got Sydney, a corruption of **St Denis**, in its turn a corruption of the Greek **Dionysus** (there is a haunting recollection of its origins in the way Sydneysiders pronounce the name of their home — *Sydenie*).⁸ This wild and fatal deity is alive and well in his name city, which, in the view of the blithe and irrepressible character of the city as it has developed, is gratifyingly suitable.^v

As David Hickie, whose landmark exposé on Sydney corruption, *The Prince and the Premier*, observed:

In Sydney, amid what passes for the smart set, politicians and captains of commerce, sporting and entertainment personalities, glitterati and professional poseurs mix freely with sly-groggers, illegal bookmakers, mobsters and tramps, and the smiling butterflies of the Sydney social pages.^{vi}

While the irreverent *Smith's Weekly* kept 'a benevolent and ironic eye'^{vii} on Sydney's many storied characters, from the epigrammatically taxi-dodging Bea Miles to the sinister **Squizzy Taylor**, more sensational papers like *Truth* or the even more scandalous *Beckett's Budget* delighted in titillating their readers with salacious reports of Martha's peccadilloes; something she did little to discourage unless it strayed into libel — even she had a reputation to preserve, whatever that was. She always asserted 'on the record' that her good fortune was due to 'hard work, good investment, some lucky punts, and a frugal lifestyle.'^{viii} That always had 'em rolling: *frugality*

⁸ Dionysus, the 'twice-born' son of Zeus and Persophone, the Queen of the Underworld, was the Greek god of wine and madness, music, magic and fertility, also known as Enorches ('testicles'), Pseudanor ('false man') and Bacchus ('marshy'), was represented by the serpent and vine, dressed in leopard skins and rode a chariot drawn by panthers. Borne by his father on Icaria, where the ill-fated Icarus fell after touching the sun, he only became a god after returning from India.

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [11]: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis>

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [12]: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus>

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [13]: Did he ever come to Sydney? What about Kate Leigh?

was not a word connected to her or her lifestyle (much less *hard work*). Still, by the time she died, she left an estate — though diminished by the spectacular collapse of her investment portfolio and years of pursuit by the Tax Office — substantial enough for an annual endowment to the RSPCA and the provision of a vast and well-appointed home for retired circus animals at Villawood on the south-western outskirts of Sydney, which was later purchased by the Federal Government for use as an immigration detention and processing centre.

However, while her end — unlike her son's — was well-known enough to warrant an obituary in the *National Times* (admittedly pushed to the back pages by the still-controversial dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government), her beginnings — unlike his — are much trickier to determine. Her story was embellished and embroidered with threads that often strayed from the facts, which were enthusiastically disregarded anyway by the less reputable tabloids. Details are sketchy, and despite the most conscientious and assiduous research, can only be filled in by surmise and speculation, the truth unpicked out of the patches and holes. That she did so much to obscure and obfuscate her origins might be considered ironic, given her son's subsequent obsessive desire to determine his.

According to the day and to whom she spoke, Martha was the daughter of a **Blackwatch VC** who'd married a minor Indian princeling with vast South Indian holdings; after discovering her groom had been driven mad by syphilis (which he'd neglected to inform her of and which she somehow did not contract) the marriage was annulled, and she'd been forced to take to the stage to support herself, travelling to many of the far-flung corners of the Empire as a vaudeville comedienne and actress, appearing in a few films with Nazimova and Rambova (the provenance and nature of which are debatable) and even dancing with Josephine Baker (before they supposedly spectacularly fell out). On others, she'd roamed the South Seas with Somerset Maugham, who always spoke fondly of her as he could ever

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM
Comment [14]: Sepoy Mutiny

manage to his dear Australian bridge partner the Duchess of Killmore; had drunk with the Crosbys and Fitzgeralds; written an historical novel set in Mogul times (inspired by her travels through the Orient, although it's likely she was stealing Dulcie Deamer's thunder *again*, as Dulcie was fond of complaining, and there is no record of it ever being published, even by the notorious **Inky Stephens**); was a muse and model to artists and photographers such as the **Norman Lindsay, his son Jack and William Dobell**; and had inspired endless poetry, though the limerick above is now the only *definitively* known.⁹ Although there are some facts not entirely obscured by fantasy, she never let them spoil a good story. Especially if she was the subject. As one of her biographers noted: 'Martha's greatest work of art was her own life.'^{ix} Or as she might have said: 'Facts never made a story truer, *darling*.' Her posthumously self-published, best-selling (but now sadly out of print) autobiography, *Life is for Living: The Heartaches and Happinesses of Martha Anderson, With Snippets of Travel, Wisdom, History and More*,¹⁰ makes for engrossing reading: whatever you make of her credibility, there's no doubting her **imagination**.

On her son's birth certificate (the same on which the unaccounted-for Mr Anderson is listed as *Entrepreneur*) Martha put down her occupation as 'entertainer,' though that would have depended on the season — and the definition. When times were good, she could be found in a few Tivoli programmes as a chorus girl (or 'Tiv Tapper,' as they were fondly known): hardly the soubrette or serious actress she liked to think herself. Nevertheless, she kept a number of signed photographs from 'dear pals and co-stars,' including 'One of my mob, you little trimmer! smackers, *Mo McCackie (Roy René)*; 'Hi-dee-ho! Martha my dear, **Jack Davey**;' **Jim Gerald, George Wallace** and others, prominently displayed on her famous

¹⁰ Hereafter referred to for obvious reasons as *Life is for Living*.

Sunil Badami 12/8/13 12:50 AM

Comment [15]: Bea Miles's dad, Miles Franklin, Patrick White's first book of poems, Frank Clune, Jack Lindsay *Vision*

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [16]: Change to European or American painters? Brassai, Picasso?

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [17]: Insert comments about Lindsays v Deamer v other historians?

Sunil Badami Murdamir..., 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [18]: Signature sayings

mother-of-pearl ‘piyanner’ [*sic*], even after people had long forgotten who Jack or Jim or George or Mo or Roy René ever were. Or even her.

Despite her indefinable charisma and undoubted physical abilities — she was still fond, right into her sixties, of doing the splits after a few drinks too many — and whatever successes she may have enjoyed in Montmartre’s smoky clubs or maharajas’ mahals, it was difficult for Martha to get a foot in the stage door — let alone a foothold, even if, given her larger-than-life personality, her modest talents should have proven no impediment to the acclaim she craved: lack of talent never stopped anyone becoming famous, much less infamous; much less then, and least of all now. Still, if you’d ever heard her lustily belting out *Funiculi Funiculà*, *Melancholy Baby* or *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* to the chimney pots and possums late at night, you’d agree with her traumatised neighbours that such fame — at least on the stage of the Princess Theatre — was, despite her other abundant charms, beyond her talents. Or key.

Still, a photograph taken in her stage days (shot at the Hollywood Studios on Martin Place, which her devoted son kept by his bed for the rest of his verifiable days) reveal a face, which, if not conventionally beautiful, is handsome in a fresh and open way (even as it recalls Oscar Wilde’s observation that as a man’s face is his autobiography, a woman’s is her work of fiction).^x

Although it’s hard to imagine now how she might have held such sway over some of Sydney’s most notorious ‘colourful racing identities’ — let alone some of its most influential establishment figures, including some notable State politicians, King’s Counsels, Supreme Court judges and business tycoons; much less the endless roster of young, virile ‘chauffeurs,’ including some of Sydney’s most disreputable and debauched boxers, jockeys, actors, singers, dancers, poets manqués and avant-garde artists — that would do the indefinable allure of her irresistible sex appeal an injustice.

Sunil Badami 30/7/13 2:13 PM

Comment [19]: Include footnote? Or not bother?

Sunil Badami 8/3/13 3:09 PM

Deleted: , given the dearth of verifiable photographs of her son, and her own unverifiable—and improbably made up—history

Sunil Badami 1/8/13 2:46 AM

Comment [20]: Monkey; see Huxley “queerly; Salome; hair.”
<http://.readbookonline.net/readOnLine/14240/>

The way she wears her false eyelashes and boa suggest a trouper's easiness with her body. Her arms are dusted with freckles, and her hair, swept up in an ornate stage style, betrays errant locks here and there. Her well-known generosity was manifested in her abundant curves and plush proportions: it was, said her ghost writer, as though 'when God had offered her a selection of skins, she'd thrown the lot on.'^{xi}In this photo, taken perhaps a year or two before Baby Argyle's arrival, she seems to wear the dimpled surfeit of her body comfortably, lavishly, luxuriantly. As a poetic admirer observed in those terrible days when she seemed to have lost everything, including the will to *live, darling*, 'it seemed as if a madman had run into the Art Gallery of NSW and splashed turpentine over that Rupert Bunny, tearing the flesh away from the canvas.'^{xii} If it's now hard to see what the attraction might be, it's even harder to see exactly how this eager-looking hooper was able to amass such considerable wealth in her lifetime ('What's the use of making a living, *darling*,' she was fond of saying, 'if you're afraid of *living*?'). By the time her son had made his own name and fortune, Martha was well-known around town, festooned in an array of expensive furs and diamonds drooling on every finger, carrying her famous black Fine Bag, doling out bon-bons to children and bon-mots to the press. As Lillian Armfield told her biographer, renowned *Smith's Weekly* court rounds reporter Vince Kelly:

She had a charm that was her own, very exclusively her own in the world in which she found herself, and a natural dignity and good-humour she never lost in the most hectic of circumstances — even if her temper was another matter altogether.^{xiii}

However else she made a living, her first love was the stage. She loved the roar of the greasepaint and the smell of the crowd. The Tivoli circuit, before it succumbed to talkies and telly and property development, was still the glittering pinnacle of entertainment, with stars like Martha's 'dear pals' Mo René, George Wallace, Jim Gerald, Joe Lawman, Syd Beck from the earliest days of so-called 'nigger minstrels,' where stars like 'Charming Young

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM
Comment [21]: Patrick White?

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM
Comment [22]: Alan Wearne?

Sunil Badami 29/7/13 10:38 PM
Comment [23]: E Philips Fox — but Bunny is good; Salome; Rabbitoh

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM
Comment [24]: Confirm

Sunil Badami 13/3/13 12:34 PM
Deleted: or whatever other games she played

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM
Comment [25]: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Roar_of_the_Greasepaint_-_The_Smell_of_the_Crowd

Antipodean Cantatrice' Francie Adler, the rubber-faced Ed E. Ford, Joe Lawman, Vaude and Verne and others — all now forgotten — played to packed houses and rolling aisles.

It's hard to imagine now, in this age of such disposable celebrity, where anyone can become famous simply for being famous — or on even lesser pretext — how celebrated this galaxy was, even if names that once inspired such wonder or laughter like nimble Con Colleano, Merv Smith or 'the wondrous' Florrie Le Vere are now only 'names,' flickering in the uncertain gloaming of long-dead houselights.

Martha must have been part of the throngs that waited some twenty or thirty deep outside the stage door on Chrysanthemum Lane, clamouring for a look or even an autograph from some of these much-applauded stars; and she craved the same adulation:

'Seeing the likes of Cheekie Marie Lloyd or Renée Barlee accepting all the bouquets and soubriquets [*sic*] flung at them only made me see myself up there,' she once said. 'After all, what did Buxom Helen Boyce have that I didn't?'^{xiv}

(to which less kind critics — and long-suffering neighbours — might have added 'a decent singing voice.')

There were 'serious' theatre companies such as the Gregan McMahon Players, the Independent, New or Playbox Theatres, championing the plays of Chekhov, Shaw, Synge, Brecht, O'Neill and [some] emerging Australian playwrights such as Ray Lawlor, Sumner Locke Elliot or Patrick White,^{xv} but these were small, semi-professional repertories, appealing to an elite minority and often struggling to stay afloat (the last spoken-word serious theatre left being the Criterion before it was demolished to make way for yet another car park).

The Tiv was where the fame and fortune were, which, thanks to bursting box office receipts, presented spectacles with cartoonists, acrobats,

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [26]: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/14328405>

Sunil Badami 1/8/13 2:46 AM

Comment [27]: NZ: http://.ashack.co.nz/nzmusic/musicians/graeme_wilson.htm

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [28]: Flower, truth

Sunil Badami 12/6/13 11:11 PM

Comment [29]: Slessor, Darlinghurst Nights, Goodbye Chorus Lady! 46; motherhood

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [30]: Dead in 1922

Sunil Badami 29/7/13 10:38 PM

Comment [31]: George & Pakie Macdougall — moved from Rowe Street in 1929 via Crown Street to Young Street in 1931 before closing — Deamer 215

animals, comics, impersonators, monologists, escapologists, ventriloquists, magicians — and sometimes occasional chorus girls with pretensions to comedy *and* predilections for drama — even if she spent more time on the less family-friendly stages of Fuller’s and Clay’s,¹¹ where the racy double-entendres and jazzy rhythms were more her style.¹²

Especially when the Tivoli’s re-purchase by the flamboyant entrepreneur Hugh D. ‘Huge Deal’ MacIntosh resulted in the sacking of twenty-one chorus girls, including Martha. On their last night the cohort swaggered on stage with cigarettes hanging from their lips, drunk on grog they swigged straight from the bottle. The stage manager, a highly-strung ‘nervous nellie,’ dropped the curtain, but not before one tapper, unidentified in the ruckus, pulled her skirts up over her head and ‘brown-eyed’ the audience. In the tumult, the police were called, even if by the time they arrived, most were so drunk that they stayed where they lay. Apart from Martha, smoothing her dress, her boot triumphantly planted in the prostrate nervous nellie’s behind.

A foothold of sorts, then.¹³

Although it meant ‘an extended off-season’ while she regrouped (and gave birth), Martha did end up being luckier than most: while a few got intermittent work ushering where they could; a few more ended up scrubbing restaurant floors; others became domestic help or secretaries; some even got

¹¹ Although as pre-eminent Australian performing arts historian Frank van Straten notes, ‘Fullers’ claim to be ‘The Home of Clean Vaudeville’ was nothing but a baseless, defensive advertising line. In fact, it was at Fuller’s that Mo and his erstwhile sidekick Stiffy first shocked delighted audiences.’ (F van Straten, *Tivoli*, Lothian, Melbourne, 34)

¹² Although she later became a fervent follower of the avant-garde *and* classical, her late-discovered enthusiasm for such music can be considered yet another manifestation of her propensity to ‘love as deeply as long as she loved;’ despite being a subscriber and supporter of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra when her ‘dear friend, darling’ Sir Eugene Goossens was conductor (even if her other engagements often precluded attendance), it’s easier to imagine her bawling out such bawdy old standards as *I Never Forget I’m a Lay-dee* or newer numbers like *It’s the First Time I’ve Ever Done That !* than arias like *O soave fanciulla* or *Quando me n’vo per la via...*

¹³ As Martha — whose skirt, if it were hers, was back in place — remarked breathlessly to reporters on the way out (while naturally not admitting any liability): ‘One of the constables called out “Why didn’t you give the asshole another boot?”’

Sunil Badami 1/8/13 2:46 AM

Comment [32]: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_boh%C3%A8me

http://nomorelyrics.net/giacomo_puccini-lyrics/175674-o_soave_fanciulla-lyrics.html

<http://classicalmusic.about.com/od/opera/qt/musettaswaltz.htm>

Sunil Badami 4/6/13 1:00 PM

Comment [33]: Confirm Tivoli? Check Van Straten

hitched and moved to the bush, or the suburbs, or wherever; and one became the permanent mermaid in the fish tank in the foyer of the Crystal Palace cinema; the rest ended up on Palmer Street. To the end, she was always adamant she wasn't one of *those girls*.

Endnotes

ⁱ Not long after Baby Argyle's arrival on the "Watto Bay," Sydney's tram network would become Australia's largest, with over 180 miles (290 km) of lines, such an intrinsic thread woven through the city's geographic and psychic fabric it would give rise to such popular colloquialisms as "shooting through like a Bondi tram" (to depart hastily, as so many of Baby Argyle's erstwhile uncles would, reflecting the speed with which the aforementioned tram would rush down Bondi Road to the beach) or "the man on the Bondi tram" (the fictional legal character, similar to the British "man on the Clapham omnibus" evoking the average, sentimental bloke in the street).

Yet within a few years of that pinnacle, the system would slowly be dismantled, with the last line being paved over in the 1960s. As tram historian David Hoadley points out, 'within minutes of the last tram's run [at 1am] the overhead wires were pulled down, and the next morning (a Sunday) the tracks were paved over, to ensure there would be no return of the trams even if the buses should prove inadequate... clearly there were forces at work other than just desire for efficiency... The replacement buses were loss-making from the start, and within just a few years the City Council was starting to regret the loss of the trams, but it was too late.' (*Truth* 2 August 19--: *Tram Tot Takes Top Ticket; Conductor Conway Conferred Courage Crown*; The NSW Steam Tram and Preservation Society, *In and Around Sydney with Steam Tram*, Book IV, p 63; C Butler-Bowden, *Shooting Through: Sydney By Tram*, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, p 34)

ⁱⁱ M Anderson, *Life is for Living: The Heartaches and Happinesses of Martha Anderson, With Snippets of Travel, Wisdom, History and More*, Lysistrata Press, Leichhardt, 57

ⁱⁱⁱ *Family Circle*, September 19--, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Get first issue date and calculate from there — 1974), "Champagne and Ham: Boho Doyenne Martha Anderson-Weill-Connew-Moran-Moore-Withers-Furphy Shares Her Cocktail Ham Surprise... and Reminisces About Her Colourful Life" — Martha obsessively kept every clipping and notice of her and her son's careers, including the photos of her and "bouncing," "bonny," "becoming" "Baby Argyle, plastered across every tabloid front page the next morning (which was, admittedly, a very slow news day, coming so soon after Easter)

^{iv} *Family Circle*, September 19--, Vol. 17, No. 2

^v R Park, *The Companion Guide to Sydney*, Collins, Sydney, 13

Sunil Badami 12/8/13 12:46 AM

Deleted: <http://www.railpage.org.au/tram/sydhist.html>

^{vi} D Hickie, *Chow Hayes: Gunman – Australia’s Most Notorious Gangster*, Angus & Robertson, 2

^{vii} D Stewart, *A Man of Sydney: An Appreciation of Kenneth Slessor*, Thomas Nelson (Australia), 41

^{viii} *Truth* 19 October 19--: *Martha Makes Mincemeat of “Money Myths” – Tax Topcat’s Telling Terrible Twaddle*

^{ix} Kirkpatrick, *The Queen of Bohemia*, University of Queensland Press, xi

^x Wilde, O, *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal*, Leonard Smithers, London, 69

^{xi} G Blarney, *Criminal Queens: Powerful Women as the Playthings of Love*, Calliope Press, Blacktown, 38

^{xii} G Blarney, *Criminal Queens: Powerful Women as the Playthings of Love*, Calliope Press, Blacktown, loc. cit.

^{xiii} V Kelly, *Rugged Angel*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 168

^{xiv} M Anderson, quoted in Tape C34, Oral History Collection, Performing Arts Centre Melbourne, Performing Arts Collection: interview with F van Straten

^{xv} Bentley, *Australian Culture*, The Wolanski Foundation 19--

Sunil Badami 13/8/13 1:35 AM

Deleted: quoted in Hyde, HM, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*, Methuen, London, 441

Bibliography and References

Selected Texts: Sydney 1920 - 1939

- Allen, J Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women Since 1880
 Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990
- Blaikie, G Wild Women of Sydney
 Rigby, Adelaide, 1980
- Kelly, V Rugged Angel: The Amazing Career of Policewoman Lillian
Armfield
 Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1961
- Park, R The Harp in the South
 Penguin, Ringwood, 1987
- Perkins, R ‘Working Girls: prostitutes, their lives and social control’
 Australian Institute of Criminology, Griffith ACT, May 1991
 [<http://bit.ly/175YRcr>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Sweeney I Confess!
 Swain & Co, Leichhardt NSW, 193?
- Writer, L Razor
 Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2009

Biography: Memoir & Autobiography

- Adams, L ‘Almost Famous: The rise of the “nobody” memoir’
 Washington Monthly, April 2002
 [<http://bit.ly/18UAKvX>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Barrett, C Wanderer’s Rest
 Cassell and Co, Melbourne, 1946
- Burnside, J A Lie About My Father
 Jonathon Cape, London, 2006
- Besant, A An Autobiography
 Penguin, New Delhi, 2005
- Bird, N My God! It’s a Woman! The Autobiography of Nancy Bird
 Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1990
- Brown, R M All the Fishes Come Home to Roost: An Indian Ashram Childhood
 Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2005
- Clarke, J Dr Max Herz: Surgeon
 Alternative Publishing Co-operative, Sydney, 1976
- Dotinga, R ‘How true is that memoir?’
 The Christian Science Monitor, Boston MA, 18 January 2006
 [<http://bit.ly/133aWBL>: accessed 23 June 2013]
- Eakin, R Aunts Up the Cross
 Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1980
- Gray, R *Dyptich*
 from Selected Poems
 Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1985
- The Country I Came Through Last
 Giramondo, Sydney, 2008
- Greene, G Ways of Escape
 Penguin, London, 1981
- Kendall, F White Cargo
 Penguin, London, 1998
- Knausgård, K. O. Death in the Family
 Harvill Secker, London, 2012
- Morrison, B And When Did You Last See Your Father?

- Granta Books, Cambridge, 2007
- Rak, J Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market
Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo ON, 2013
- Rohter, L ‘He Says a Lot, for a Norwegian’
Books, *The New York Times*, 18 June 2012
[<http://nyti.ms/15G7GZF>: accessed 18 June 2013]
- Ryan, H ‘The Postmodern Memoir’, March/April 2012
AWP: The Association of Writers and Writing Programs
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
[<http://bit.ly/11HMa3Y>: accessed May 2012]
- Sage, L Bad Blood
Fourth Estate, London, 2000
- Therese, C The Weight of Silence
Hachette, Sydney, 2009
- Tretchikoff, V & Hocking, A Pigeon’s Luck
Collins, London, 1973

History, Fiction, Faction & Truth

- Armitstead, C ‘*The Guardian* Books Podcast: Memory and truth’
Perkins, B *The Guardian* Books Podcast
Lloyd Parry, R [<http://bit.ly/15rcF0W> : accessed 27 February 2011]
Atkinson, A ‘Genesis: Alan Atkinson on Recent Australian History Writing’
The Monthly, August 2009, pp 66–68
- Atwood, M Negotiating with the Dead
Virago, London, 2003 (originally published Cambridge
University Press, Cambridge, 2002)
‘In Search of *Alias Grace*: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction’
The American Historical Review, Vol. 103, No. 5, December
1998, pp 1503–1516
Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical
Association
- Barthes, R ‘The Discourse of History’ from
Shaffer E. S. (ed) Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook, Vol. 3
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981
- Beevor, A *Author, Author: ‘Real concerns’*
The Guardian, 25 July 2009
[<http://bit.ly/17f1Fas>: accessed 04 July 2009]
- Berkhofer, R ‘The Challenges of Poetics to (Normal) Historical Practice’
Poetics Today, Vol. 9, No. 2: *The Rhetoric of Interpretation and
The Interpretation of Rhetoric*
Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1988
- Blainey, G ‘Drawing Up a Balance Sheet of Our History’
Quadrant, Vol. 37, No. 7–8, July–August 1993, pp 10–15
- Canary, R & Kozicki, H The Writing of History
University of Wisconsin Press, Madison WI, 1978
Gossman, L ‘History and Literature: Reproduction or Signification,’ pp 3–39
Carroll, R ‘The Trouble with History and Fiction’
M/C Journal, Vol. 14, No. 3: ‘trouble’
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 2011
[<http://bit.ly/12te4Rk>: accessed 23 May 2012]
- Chakraborty, A ‘Why are English and American novels today so gutless?’

- The Guardian*, 09 April 2012
[\http://bit.ly/15LuxmN: accessed 10 April 2012]
- Clark, B ‘The Novel is Dead, Long Live the Novel’
The Virginia Quarterly Review, Summer 2006, pp 162–177
[\http://bit.ly/1749GvC: accessed 21 September 2011]
- Clarke, S ‘Searching for the Secret River’
The Australian, 7 October 2006
[\http://bit.ly/11ZsZBx: accessed 23 June 2013]
- Clendinnen, I ‘Fellow Sufferers: History and Imagination’
Australian Humanities Review, September 1996
 Australian National University, ACT, 1996
[\http://bit.ly/GIkAcK : accessed 16 February 2010]
- Askeland, L* ‘A response to Inga Clendinnen’
[\http://bit.ly/17f34xR : accessed 16 February 2010]
- Pybus, C* ‘Cassandra Pybus responds to Inga Clendinnen’
[\http://bit.ly/13csNm1 : accessed 16 February 2010]
- ‘The Secret River’ pp 16–28
 ‘Novelists, Historians and the Moral Contract’ pp 29–37
The History Question: Who Owns the Past?
Quarterly Essay #23, October 2006,
 Black Inc, Melbourne, 2006
 ‘The History Question: Response to Correspondence’ pp 66–72
Quarterly Essay #25, March 2007,
 Black Inc, Melbourne, 2007
Dancing with Strangers
 Text, Melbourne, 2005
- Pybus, C ‘Stirring Stories in the White Pages’
The Australian, 19 February 2011
[\http://bit.ly/11MnL1s : accessed 19 February 2011]
- ‘Within Reasonable Doubt’
The Australian, 10 November 2010
[\http://bit.ly/12OaSQs: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Cohen, P ‘Next Big Thing in English: Knowing They Know That You Know’
 Books, *The New York Times*, 31 March 2010
[\http://huff.to/17yGbFN: accessed 5 April 2010]
- Cohn, D ‘Historical versus Fictional Lives: Borderlines and Borderline Cases’
The Journal of Narrative Technique, Vol. 19, No. 1
 Department of English Language and Literature at Eastern
 Michigan University, Ypsilanti MI, Winter 1989
The Distinctions of Fiction
 Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999
- Conrad, J Notes on Life and Letters
 Denton, London, 1947
- Cooper, N ‘One hoax that’s the genuine article’
The Courier-Mail, 5 May 2012
- Cormick, C ‘Writing or Rewriting History’
the and is papers: AAWP 2007
 Australian Association of Writing Programs
[\http://bit.ly/10QNqS2 : accessed 1 June 2013]
- Cormick, C Unwritten Histories
 Australian Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal
 and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1998
- Cosic, M ‘A history in fiction’
The Weekend Australian Magazine, 27 August 2011
- Crace, J ‘Mark Twain on truth and fiction’
The Guardian, 26 November 2010

- [<http://bit.ly/ZCPlhK> : accessed 26 November 2010]
- Cravens, C. S. 'Review: The Distinctions of Fiction'
Comparative Literature Studies, Vol. 37, No. 1
Penn State University Press, University Park, PA, 2000
- Cunningham, S [ed] *Meanjin* 4-2009, Summer: Vol 68, No 4
Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, November 2009
- Gleeson-White, J 'The Secret Life of Stories'
James, W 'History and Fiction'
Wood, C 'Forgive me, forgive me: The Ethics of Using Other People's
Lives in Fiction'
- Cunningham, S 'Making up the truth'
Review, The Age, 13 September 2003, p 8
[<http://bit.ly/1aB1K74>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Curthoys, A & Docker, J Is History Fiction?
University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor MI, 2005
- Daniel, H, 'Interview with David Malouf'
Australian Humanities Review, September 1996
[<http://bit.ly/14s85ll>: accessed 13 July 2013]
- Delbanco, A 'The Decline and Fall of Literature'
The New York Review of Books, 4 November 1999
- Donadio, R 'The Irascible Prophet: V. S. Naipaul at Home'
The New York Times, 7 August 2005
[<http://nyti.ms/1dN9AKO>: accessed 18 September 2011]
- 'Truth Is Stronger Than Fiction'
The New York Times, 7 August 2005
[<http://bit.ly/1749GvC>: accessed 18 September 2011]
- Dowling, W C 'Invisible Audience: Peter J. Rabinowitz's *Truth in Fiction*'
Critical Inquiry, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1979)
University of Chicago Press, Chicago
- Dalley, J 'Life after "Nemesis"'
life&arts, Financial Times, 24 June 2011
[<http://on.ft.com/171KHNU>: accessed 11 June 2013]
- David, S 'Tall tales from history: Are historians best placed to write historical
fiction?'
The Independent, 13 August 2010
[<http://ind.pn/11M5CMR>: accessed 23 June 2013]
- Davis, L Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel
University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1997
- deLillo, D 'The power of history'
The New York Times Magazine, 7 September 1997
[<http://nyti.ms/yIuSXj> : accessed 01 March 2010]
- Doctorow, E L 'Notes on the History of Fiction'
The Atlantic Fiction Issue, 1 August 2006
[<http://bit.ly/12iMB7T>: accessed 23 September 2012]
- Duncker, P Writing on the Wall
Pandora Press, London, 2002
- Enright, A (et al) 'Ten Rules for Writing Fiction'
The Guardian, 20 February 2010
[<http://bit.ly/xbEEVR> : accessed 22 February 2010]
- D'Agata, J (author) The Lifespan of a Fact
Fingal, J (fact-checker) W.W. Norton & Co, New York NY, 2012
- Falconer, D 'Searching for the Secret River'
The Age, 1 September 2006
[<http://bit.ly/11GGrij>: accessed 23 June 2013]
- Foley, B 'History, Fiction, and the Ground Between: The Use of the
Documentary Mode in Black Literature'

- PMLA*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (May 1980), pp 389–403
 Modern Language Association, New York, NY
Telling the Truth: The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction
 Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1987
- Franzen, J ‘Perchance to Dream: In the Age of Images, A Reason to Write Novels’
Harper’s Magazine, April 1996, pp 35–54
 ‘Mr Difficult: William Gaddis and the problem of hard-to-read books’
Life and Letters, The New Yorker, 30 September 2002, pp 100–112
- Galt Harpham, G ‘E. L. Doctorow and the Technology of Narrative’
PMLA, Vol. 100, No. 1 (Jan 1985), pp 81–95
 Modern Language Association, New York, NY
- Garton Ash, T ‘Timothy Garton Ash on The History of the Present’
 Five Books, 15 April 2011
[\http://bit.ly/10IgvlN : accessed 15 April 2011]
- Ginsburg, M P ‘Fictional Truth: Review’
Comparative Literature Studies, Vol. 28, No. 4
 Penn State University Press, University Park PA, 1991
- Grenville, K Kate Grenville – Australian Author – Official Web Site
 ‘Facts and Fiction’ [2005a]
[\http://bit.ly/18vbe3f: accessed 20 June 2013]
 ‘Searching for the Secret River’ [2005b]
[\http://bit.ly/13YSR8y: accessed 20 June 2013]
 ‘Unsettling the Settler’
 (originally published in *Psychoanalysis Downunder, The Online Journal of the Australian Psychoanalytical Society*, Issue #7B,
 Conference Papers from *Unsettling the Settler: history, culture, race and the Australian self*, 22 July 2006: <http://bit.ly/14ymJYg>)
[\http://bit.ly/13SLI2g: accessed 20 June 2013]
 ‘The History Question: Response’
Quarterly Essay #25, March 2007, pp 66–72
 Black Inc, Melbourne, 2007
Lilian’s Story
 Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 1995
The Secret River
 Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2005
Searching for the Secret River
 Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2006
Sarah Thornhill
 Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2011
- Gutiérrez, M M ‘Fields and Frames in Historical Fiction about the Salem Witchcraft Trials: An Analysis of Salem Witchcraft; or the Adventures of Parson Handy, from Punkapog Pond (1827)’
Nebula ^{7.3}: *A Journal of Multidisciplinary Scholarship*,
 September 2010
Nebula e-Periodical, Glebe, 2010
- Harper, D ‘Fiction’
 Online Etymology Dictionary
[\http://bit.ly/17j6sE7: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Heiss, A ‘Aborigines taking control of their history’
ANU Reporter, Vol. 29, No. 4, 8 April 1998
[\http://bit.ly/1aQ1AXP : accessed 2 June 2013]
- Howard, J ‘A Sense of Balance: The Australian Achievement’
 The National Press Club, Canberra, 2006
 ‘The Liberal Tradition: The Beliefs and Values Which Guide the
- Federal

- Government?
 Sir Robert Menzies Lecture 1996, The Sir Robert Menzies Lecture Trust, Melbourne, 18 November 1996
[\[http://bit.ly/1bNRiux\]](http://bit.ly/1bNRiux): accessed 16 July 2013]
- The Institute of Historical Research 'Novel approaches: from academic history to historical fiction'
 Virtual conference, 21–25 November 2011
 The University of London, London, 2011
[\[http://bit.ly/12ouNnF\]](http://bit.ly/12ouNnF): accessed 21–25 November 2011]
- James, H The Art of the Novel
 Scribner, New York, 1957
- Jenkins, K Why History: Ethics and Postmodernity
 Routledge, London, 1999
- Johnson, S 'Defining the Genre: What are the rules of historical fiction?'
 From the *Defining The Genre Guide* [R. Lee, ed]
 Historical Novel Society, 2002
[\[http://bit.ly/11hGZXV\]](http://bit.ly/11hGZXV) : accessed 04 June 2013]
Historical Fiction: A Guide to the Genre
 Libraries Unlimited, Westport Connecticut, 2005
- Kamenksy, J 'Novelties: A Historian's Field Notes from Fiction'
Historically Speaking, Vol. 12, No. 2 (April 2011) pp 2–6
[\[http://bit.ly/1aM60BM\]](http://bit.ly/1aM60BM): accessed 23 September 2012]
- Katsoulis, M Telling Tales: A History of Literary Hoaxes
 Hardie Grant, London, 2010
- King, R 'Identity Cheek'
The Australian Literary Review, Vol. 5, No. 3, 7 April 2010, pp 8–9
[\[http://bit.ly/11a8y4x3\]](http://bit.ly/11a8y4x3): accessed 18 October 2010]
- King, R 'The Discipline of Fact/The Freedom of Fiction?'
Journal of American Studies, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Aug 1991), pp 171–188
 Cambridge University Press (on behalf of the British Association for American Studies), Cambridge
- Koval, R 'Making it up or making it sing: historians write fiction'
 The Book Show, ABC Radio National, 16 April 2010
[\[http://bit.ly/xUoNoT\]](http://bit.ly/xUoNoT) : accessed 01 May 2010]
- Clinton, C
Haebich, A
Teo, H-M
Grenville, K 'Kate Grenville'
Books and Writing, ABC Radio National, 16 July 2005
[\[http://bit.ly/10xnxvA\]](http://bit.ly/10xnxvA): accessed 20 June 2013]
- Krauth, N & Webb, J (eds) TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses
 Australian Association of Writing Programs
Nelson, C 'Faking It: History and Creative Writing'
 TEXT, Vol 11, No 2 (October 2007)
[\[http://bit.ly/oC5rcV\]](http://bit.ly/oC5rcV) : accessed 10 Feb 2010]
- Brien, D L* 'Based on a True Story: The Problem of Perception of Biographical Truth in Narratives Based on Real Lives'
[\[http://bit.ly/qG8Pqq\]](http://bit.ly/qG8Pqq) : accessed 10 Feb 2010]
- Sutherland, E & Gibbons, T* 'Historical Fiction and History: Members of the Same Family'
 TEXT, Vol 13, No 2 (October 2009)
[\[http://bit.ly/qG8Pqq\]](http://bit.ly/qG8Pqq) : accessed 10 Feb 2010]
- Koelb, C 'Michael Riffaterre: Fictional Truth'
MFS Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 36, No. 4
 Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Winter 1990
- Kossew, S (ed) *Lighting Dark Places: Essays on Kate Grenville*
Cross/Cultures: Readings in the Post/Colonial Literatures in English, 131

- Collins, E 'Poison in the Flour: Kate Grenville's The Secret River' pp 167–178
(originally published in *Meanjin*, Vol. 65, No. 1, 2006)
- Pinto, S 'History, Fiction and the Secret River' pp 179–198
Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2010
- Kundera, M The Art of the Novel
Perennial Classics, HarperCollins, New York, 2000 (1986)
Cross/Cultures
- LaCapra, D History, Politics, and the Novel
Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1987
- Lawson, M 'Contemporary Fiction Can Still Stand the Test of Time'
The Guardian, 10 September, 2009
[<http://bit.ly/nbIMux> : accessed 25 October 2009]
- Longhurst, D 'A Response to Peter Rabinowitz'
Critical Inquiry, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Spring 1986)
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986
- Lukacs, G The Historical Novel
Merlin Press, London, 1962
- Maher, L 'Historians on The Secret River'
666 ABC Canberra, 13 February 2013
- Mares, P 'The fact versus fiction debate'
The Book Show, ABC Radio National, 9 August 2011
[<http://bit.ly/137F8Mb>: accessed 23 June 2013]
- Clarke, J
Heath, S
Macris, A &
Martyr, P 'Rich as Fiction: Historians and History-writing'
Quadrant, Vol. 53, No. 6, June 2009, pp 76–77
- Ricklefs M C (eds.) Surrender Australia? Essays in the study and uses of history:
Geoffrey Blainey & Asian Immigration
George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1985
- Masson, S 'Desperate for some great stories'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 July 2004, p 11
[<http://bit.ly/13NemC6>: accessed 4 August 2011]
- McKenna, M 'Writing the Past'
Best Australian Essays 2006, pp 96–110
Black Inc, Melbourne, 2006
'Different Perspectives on Black Armband History'
Research Paper 5 1997-98
Australian Parliament House, Canberra, 10 November 1997
[<http://bit.ly/1aY3Kdg>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Miller, A 'Written In Our Hearts: Thinking About Truth in Fiction and
History'
'Alex Miller: Truth in Fiction and History'
The Book Show, ABC Radio National, 30 November 2006
- Mordue, M 'Is the novel dead?'
Spectrum, The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 January 2003, p 4
[<http://bit.ly/15esK8Z>: accessed 11 June 2013]
- Mortimer, I 'Why historians should write fiction'
Past and Future, Issue 10, Autumn/Winter 2011, pp 7–8
Institute of Historical Research, University of London, London,
2011
- Muecke, S 'Comments on S Badami Academic Review'
23 March 2010
- Nile, R The Making of the Australian Literary Imagination
University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2002
- O'Brien, S 'The Social Concerns of the Thriller'
Times Literary Supplement, 20 January 2010
[<http://bit.ly/pZS6qp> : accessed 03 February 2010]

- Parks, J G 'The Politics of Polyphony: The Fiction of E. L. Doctorow'
Twentieth Century Literature, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter, 1991) pp 454–463
Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY, 1991
- Pihlainen, K 'The moral of the historical story: textual differences in fact and fiction'
New Literary History Vol. 33, No. 1, Summer 2002
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore
- Pollack, E 'The Interplay of Form and Content in Nonfiction Writing'
The Writer's Chronicle, March/April 2007, 51-57
AWP: The Association of Writers and Writing Programs
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
- 'Fiction Writers and Other Well-Intentioned Frauds'
The Writers' Chronicle, Vol. 35, No. 5: March/April 2003, 33–40
AWP: The Association of Writers and Writing Programs
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
- Pybus, C 'Stirring Stories in the White Pages'
The Australian, 19 February 2011
[<http://bit.ly/11MnL1s> : accessed 19 February 2011]
- 'Within Reasonable Doubt'
The Australian, 10 November 2010
[<http://bit.ly/12OaSqs>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Rabelais, K *The Forum*: 'On beautiful lies'
The Australian, 23 August 2008
[<http://bit.ly/15sm5bP>: accessed 1 March 2010]
- Rabinowitz, P 'Truth in Fiction: A Re-examination of Audiences'
Critical Inquiry, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Autumn 1977)
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1977
- 'Assertion and Assumption: Fictional Patterns and the External World'
PMLA, Vol. 96, No. 3, pp 408–419
Modern Language Association, New York, January 1985
- Rancière, J *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994
- Raphael, L 'Do You Still Read Fiction?'
The Blog, The Huffington Post, 1 July 2011
[<http://huff.to/19TMym4>: accessed 3 July 2011]
- Rexroth, K *Classics Revisited A New Directions Book: Classics Series*
New Directions Publishing, New York, 1968
- Riffaterre, M *Fictional Truth*
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1990
- Romanski, P & Aïssatou, S-W (eds.) *Trompe(-)L'œil: Imitation & Falsification*
Publications de l'Université de Rouen, Havre, 2002
- Mycak, S 'The Forgery of Ethnic Identity: A Recent Australian Literary Hoax' pp 297–306
- Ryckmans, P 'Lies that tell the Truth'
The Monthly, November 2007
- (writing as S Leys)
- Schama, S *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)*
Granta Books/Knopf, London, 1991
- Shone, T 'Have We Given Up on Fiction?'
The Daily Beast, 17 March 2010
[<http://thebea.st/ZBHwqn>: accessed 31 March 2010]
- Smart, R 'The Rhetoric of the "Other" Literature (review)'
MFS Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 36, No. 4, Winter 1990
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD
- Strout, C 'Border Crossings: History, Fiction and Dead Certainties'

- History and Theory, Vol. 31, No. 2 (May 1992)
Blackwell Publishing (for Wesleyan University), Malden MA, 1992
- Sullivan, J 'Making a fiction of history...'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 March 2006
[<http://bit.ly/14iJFak>: accessed 20 June 2013]
- Teo, H-M 'Historical fiction and fictions of history'
Rethinking History, Vol. 15, No. 2, June 2011, pp 297–313
Routledge, London, 2005
- Turner, J W 'The Kinds of Historical Fiction: An Essay in Definition and Methodology'
Genre, Vol XII, No. 3, Fall 1979, pp 333–355
University of Oklahoma
Duke University Press, Durham, NC
[<http://bit.ly/nrCESY>: accessed 04 October 2010]
- Twain, M Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World
American Publishing Company, Hartford, 1897
- White, H Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature & Theory
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2011
Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973
Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1978
'The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory'
History and Theory, Vol. 23, No. 1, February 1984, pp 1–33
Wesleyan University, Middletown
The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1987
Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999
- Winterowd, W R The Rhetoric of the "Other" Literature
Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale IL, 1990

Literary Hoaxes, Plagiarism, Historical and Meta Fiction

- Allam, L 'Oh, the stories we tell: an incomplete history of the literary hoax in Australia'
Hindsight, ABC Radio National, 8 August 2010
- Allen, W *Sweet and Lowdown*
Sony Pictures Classics, Los Angeles, 1999
Zelig
Orion Pictures Corporation, Los Angeles, 1983
- Anderson, B Errol, Fidel and the Cuban Rebel Girls
University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2010
- Anderson, D 'After Humanism, What Forgiveness?'
Australian Book Review ABR, February-March 1996, No. 178, pp 12–14
- Arnott, J The House of Rumour
Sceptre, London, 2012
- Atherton, C "'Fuck all editors": The Ern Malley affair and Gwen Harwood's *Bulletin* scandal'

- Atwood, M *Journal of Australian Studies* Vol. 26, No. 72, 2002: pp 149–157
Alias Grace
Bloomsbury, London, 1996
- Baird, R P ‘Stories Are Not All Equal: An Interview With Wu Ming’
Chicago Review, Vol. 52, Nos. 2/3/4
University of Chicago, Chicago IL, 2006
- Bantick, C ‘Trying to restore Aboriginality into our history’
The Canberra Times, 20 September 1998
- Barrington, G The History of New South Wales, including Botany Bay etc etc
Sherwood, Neely and Jones, London, 1802
- Beckett, A Fakes: Forgery and the Art World
R. Cohen Books, London, 1995
- Bennett, T &
Carter, D Culture in Australia: Policies, Publics and Programs
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001
- Carter, D &
Ferre, K ‘Chapter 6: The Public Life of Literature,’ pp 140–160
- Turner, G ‘Chapter 7: Reshaping Australian Institutions: Popular Culture, The Market and the Public Sphere,’ pp 161– 175
- Biggs, J ‘It could be me’
London Review of Books, Vol. 35 No. 2, 24 January 2013, pp 31–32
- Boyd, W ‘Charles Dickens: A Life by Claire Tomalin’
The Observer 2 October 2011
[<http://bit.ly/1dnhlqm>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Bradley, J &
Johnson, K ‘Waiting for the Ultimate Snuff Flick’
readme Issue #1 Fall 1999
[<http://bit.ly/1a3svTW>: accessed 22 June 2013]
- Binet, L HHhH
Harvill Secker, London, 2012
- Bolaño, R 2666
Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, 2008
- Bosman, J ‘Jonah Lehrer Resigns From The New Yorker After Making Up Dylan Quotes For His Book’
Media Decoder, The New York Times, 30 July 2012
[<http://nyti.ms/115wllq>: accessed 31 July 2012]
- Boyd, W ‘N is for N’ from The Dream Lover
Bloomsbury, London, 2007
- ‘The Biggest Art Hoax in History’
Harper’s Bazaar, 1 April 2011
[<http://bit.ly/10SJGCG>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- ‘How I Fooled the Art World’
The Telegraph, 13 November 2011
[<http://bit.ly/10SJLWI>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Brass, K ‘The Author Who Hadn’t Read a Book Before he Turned Eighteen’
Australian Women’s Weekly 24 December 1980, p 20
- Bray, J, Gibbons, A &
McHale, B (eds) The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature
Routledge, New York, 2012
- de la Bretonne, R Monsieur Nicolas: Or, The Human Heart Unveiled: The intimate memoirs of Restif de la Bretonne
Rodker, London, 1931 (1794–1797)
- Mathers, R C (trans)
- Byrne, J ‘First Tuesday Book Club: Jennifer Byrne Presents Hoaxes’
Bayley, J
Heyward, M
Knox, M
ABC TV 1, 10 March 2009
[<http://bit.ly/11NDRC9>: accessed 1 June 2013]

- Marx, J
Cadzow, J ‘The world according to Bryce’
Good Weekend, 17 March 2012
[<http://bit.ly/13uJun6>: accessed 17 March 2012]
- Heinlein, R
Campbell, J (ed) ‘Future History’
Astounding Science-Fiction, February 1941
Street and Smith, New York
- Carey, P Illywhacker
University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985
Oscar and Lucinda
University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988
Jack Maggs
University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1997
True History of the Kelly Gang
University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2000
My Life as a Fake
Knopf, New York, 2003
- Carter, D ‘Public Intellectuals, Book Culture and Civil Society’
Australian Humanities Review, November 2001
[<http://bit.ly/18nILMC>: accessed 14 July 2013]
- Caterson, S Hoax Nation: Australian Fakes & Frauds, From Plato to Norma Khouri
Arcade Publications, Melbourne, 2009
‘The Norma Khouri Affair’
Quadrant, Vol. 49, No. 12, December 2005, pp 63–67
- Caslon Analytics ‘Forgery and fakes: literary forgery and fraud’
Braddon, ACT, March 2010
[<http://bit.ly/14KEMW5>: accessed 1 June 2013]
- Celluloid Liberation Front ‘Wu Ming: A band of militant storytellers’
The New Statesman, Cultural Capital, 29 May 2013
[<http://bit.ly/100Atd7>: accessed 9 June 2013]
- China, C ‘Under the Influence of Prize Culture: Helen Demidenko and the Australian/Vogel, Miles Franklin, and ALS Gold Medal Awards’
Paper presented to Culture and the Literary Prize Conference 2003
Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, 2003
- Chiew, M ‘Higher Arc Salutes Angry Penguins’
Higher Arc Blog, August 2012
Luke Brown Design, Melbourne, 2012
[<http://bit.ly/16Tpq8I>: accessed 1 June 2013]
- Chittenden, M ‘James Lever: I’m the real Cheeta’
Times Online, 19 October 2008
[<http://bit.ly/nijoaL>: accessed 1 June 2010]
- Connolly, K ‘Helene Hegemann: “There’s no such thing as originality, just authenticity”’
The Observer, 24 June 2012
[<http://bit.ly/14H1DbJ>: accessed 25 June 2012]
- Constable, G Culture and Spirituality in Medieval Europe
Ashgate Publishing Company, Farnham UK, 1996
- Clarke, S ‘Searching for the Secret River’
The Australian, 7 October 2006
[<http://bit.ly/11ZsZBx>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Cleaver, E ‘An Epic Project: Interview with Richard House on The Kills’
Litro, 23 May 2013
[<http://bit.ly/1aGO1vz>: accessed 23 July 2013]
- Cravens, C S (trans) The North American Jára Cimrman Society
[<http://bit.ly/16d1gCj>: accessed 12 June 2013]

- Cooper, N 'One Hoax that's the genuine article'
Courier-Mail, 5 May 2012
[<http://bit.ly/14p25YU>: accessed 1 June 2013]
- Culotta, N They're a Weird Mob
Text Classics, Melbourne, 2012
- Davis, M 'Assaying the essay: fear and loathing in the literary coteries'
Overland No. 156, 1999, pp 3–10
- Defoe, D Moll Flanders
Penguin Popular Classics, London, 2007
Robinson Crusoe
Wordsworth Classics, London, 1992
- Demidenko, H The Hand That Signed The Paper
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 1995
'Three Stories... by a very smart woman, Helen Demidenko'
The Australian National News of the Day and One Nation archives
[undated]
[<http://www.gwb.com.au/gwb/news/goss/three.htm>: 10 July 2013]
'Writing After Winning'
Australian Humanities Review
'Stories and stereotypes – critics miss the mark'
The Age, 26 June 1995, p 15
[<http://bit.ly/1aNMjvO>: accessed 14 July 2013]
'Legendary Journeys'
Travel, The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 July 1995, p 1
[<http://bit.ly/18g3QbI>: accessed 13 July 2013]
- Deseriis, M 'Lots of Money Because I Am Many: The Luther Blissett Project and the Multiple Use Name Strategy'
Thamyris/Intersecting, No. 21 (2010), pp 65–94
- Doctorow, E L 'False Documents'
Essays and Conversations
The Ontario Review Press, Princeton NJ, 1983 (1977)
- Dutton, D 'Plagiarism and Forgery' from
Chadwick, R (ed.) Encyclopaedia of Applied Ethics, Vol. 2
Academic Press, San Diego, 1998
- Eco, U Travels in Hyperreality: Essays
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1986 (1995)
- Engler, B & Müller, K Historiographic Metafiction in Modern American and Canadian Literature
Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 1994
- Fludernik, M* 'History and metafiction: Experientiality, causality and myth' pp 81–101
- Everage, E My Gorgeous Life: The Life, The Loves, The Legend
(with H Humphries) Macmillan, Sydney, 1994
- Farrelly, E 'Unoriginal sins'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 18 January 2003
[<http://bit.ly/18f49DD>: accessed 10 July 2013]
'Losing the plot on fact and fiction'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 27 May 2006
[<http://bit.ly/16CrGez>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Fitzpatrick, K The Anxiety of Obsolescence: The American Novel in the Age of Television
Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville TN, 2006
- Flanagan, R Gould's Book of Fish
Picador Australia, Sydney, 2001
- Flood, A 'Jonah Lehrer's UK publisher withdraws Imagine over falsified quotes'

- The Guardian*, 3 August 2012
[<http://bit.ly/11DHoHD>: accessed 3 August 2012]
- Flynn, E My Wicked, Wicked Ways
William Heinemann, London, 1959
- Fowles, J The French Lieutenant's Woman
Jonathon Cape, London, 1969
- Frank, T 'Ad Absurdum'
Harpers Magazine, August 2013, p 5
- Fraser, M 'A picaresque ride with a shrewd innocent'
Spectrum, The Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April 1995, p 11
[<http://bit.ly/14bvebO>: accessed 14 July 2013]
- Freeman, J 'Helen sends her sincere regrets, signed Darville'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 August 1995
[<http://bit.ly/18k2NHP>: accessed 14 July 2013]
- Frey, J A Million Little Pieces
John Murray, London, 2004
- Fuentes, N The Autobiography of Fidel Castro
W.W. Norton, New York, NY, 2010
- Kushner, A (trans)
Furphy, J Such is Life
(Collins, T) Sydney University 1997 (1903)
[<http://bit.ly/13nut0a>: accessed 23 June 2013]
- Garner, H Joe Cinque's Consolation
Picador, Sydney, 2004
Monkey Grip (from the Popular Penguins Series)
Penguin, Ringwood, 2008
The First Stone: Some Questions about Sex and Power
Picador, Sydney, 1995
The Spare Room
Text, Melbourne, 2008
- Gentill, S A Few Right Thinking Men: A Rowly Sinclair Mystery
Pantera Press, Sydney, 2010
A Decline in Prophets: A Rowly Sinclair Mystery
Pantera Press, Sydney, 2011
- Glover, R 'Fantasy Starts in Suburban Cringe'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 August 1995, p 13
- "Gould, S" 'Scare Campaigns and Science Reporting'
Quadrant, Vol. LIII, Number 1–2, Jan-Feb 2009, pp 70–73
Quadrant Online: <http://www.quadrant.org.au>
[<http://bit.ly/16OuJ9q>: accessed 6 June 2009]
'Diary of a Hoax'
22 November 2008
[<http://bit.ly/16OuUSh>: accessed 6 June 2009]
- Grattan, M 'Howard claims victory in the national culture wars'
The Age, 26 January 2006
[<http://bit.ly/12OPIFt>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Grenville, K The Secret River
Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2005
In Search of The Secret River
Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2006
- Haglund, D 'When Dickens Met Dostoevsky (Maybe)'
browbeat, Slate, 13 January 2012
[<http://slate.me/12k8gK9>: accessed 11 July 2013]
'The Dickens-Dostoevsky Hoax Explained'
browbeat, Slate, 11 April 2013
[<http://slate.me/1bs14Co>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Hardy, F Power Without Glory

- Vintage, Sydney, 2008 [originally self-published 1950]
- “Harvey, S” ‘Dickens’s Villains: A Confession and a Suggestion’
The Dickensian, Vol. 98, No. 458, Winter 2002, pp 233–235
- Haynes, G ‘Bob Dylan Responds to Jonah Lehrer — A VICE Exclusive’
VICE Magazine, Toronto, 2012
[<http://bit.ly/15VAbCV>: accessed 12 June 2013]
- Hegemann, H Axolotl Roadkill
Ullstein, Berlin, 2010
- Henderson, G ‘Playing loose with the truth in this work of “faction”’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June 1995, p 11
[<http://bit.ly/17kD5Sp>: accessed 14 July 2011]
‘For fiction written as fact read fraud’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 18 March 1997, p 21
[<http://bit.ly/179eGPH>: accessed 14 July 2011]
- Heti, S How Should a Person Be?
Harvill Secker, London, 2013
‘Interview with David Hickey’
The Believer, Nov/Dec 2007
[<http://bit.ly/1bfqOir>: accessed 11 May 2013]
- Hooker, J The Bush Soldiers
Viking, Sydney, 1984
- Horne, D ‘The Hoax That Misfired’
The Bulletin, 19 August 1961, p 8
- Horowitz, E (et al) The Silent History
[<http://bit.ly/1bd7h7y>: accessed 19 October 2012]
Ying, Horowitz & Quinn, San Francisco, 2012
- Howard, R The Fabulist: The Incredible Story of Louis de Rougemont
Random House Australia, North Sydney, 2006
- Jopson, D ‘Storm erupts over “Aboriginal” writer’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 March 1997, p 7
[<http://bit.ly/13NEZOj>: accessed 14 July 2013]
‘Writing wrongs’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 March 1997, p 38
[<http://bit.ly/1aNJUKT>: accessed 14 July 2013]
- Julavits, H ‘Rejoice! Believe! Be Strong and Read Hard!: A Call for a New Era of Experimentation, and a Book Culture That Will Support It’
The Believer, Nov/Dec 2003
[<http://bit.ly/10X03yf>: accessed 11 May 2013]
- Kamensky, J ‘Novelties: A Historian's Field Notes from Fiction.’
Historically Speaking Vol. 12, No. 2, pp 2–6
The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, April 2011
- Keneally, T The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith
Viking Press, New York, 1972
Season in Purgatory
Collins, London and Sydney, 1976
- Kingsley, P ‘The Paddlesworth Press: the spoof newspaper that’s nearly real’
The Guardian, 27 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/18GPPUp>: accessed 27 September 2010]
- Knausgård, K O Min Kamp: My Struggle, Vols 1-2
(Bartlett, D, trans.) Random House, New York, NY, 2012
- Knight, P & Long, J J Fakes and Forgeries
Cambridge Scholars Press, Amersham UK, 2004
- Knox, M ‘Bestseller’s Lies Exposed’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 July 2004
‘The Darville made me do it’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 July 2005

- Kolbert, E 'The Things People Say'
The New Yorker, 2 November 2009
- Koolmartrie, W My Own Sweet Time
Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, Broome, 1994
- Kuznetsov, A A Babi Yar: A Novel in the Form of a Novel
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1970
- Kulish, N 'Author, 17, Says It's "Mixing," Not Plagiarism'
The New York Times, 11 February 2010
[<http://nyti.ms/1641egs>: accessed 25 June 2012]
- Kunhardt, J 'April Fools' 2010: The 11 Most Incredible Literary Hoaxes'
Huff Post Books, The Huffington Post, 1 June 2010
[<http://huff.to/16Truxx>: accessed 1 April 2010]
- Lehrer, J Imagine: The Art and Science of Creativity
Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2012
- Lever, J Me Cheeta
4th Estate, London, 2008
- Lewis, D 'Ern Malley's Namesake'
Quadrant, Vol. XXXIX, Number 3, March 1995, pp 14–15
- Lindsay, J Picnic at Hanging Rock
Penguin, Ringwood, 1977 (1967)
- Linton, J 'Sheila Heti's Hysterical Realism'
Interview
[<http://bit.ly/12yG3Fd>: accessed 8 May 2013]
- Longley, K O 'Fabricating Otherness: Demidenko and Exoticism'
Westerly, Vol.
The Darkening Ecliptic: The Poems of Ern Malley
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 1988
- "Malley, E"
Harris, M & Murray-Smith, J
Manne, R 'The Strange Case of Helen Demidenko'
Quadrant
[<http://bit.ly/15YpErb>: accessed 9 June 2013]
The Culture of Forgetting
Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1996
- Mantel, H Wolf Hall
HarperCollins, London, 2009
Bringing Up the Bodies
HarperCollins, London, 2012
- Maran, M "'Goon Squad: Jennifer Egan's time-travel tour de force'
Salon, 14 June 2010
[<http://bit.ly/1boMaMk>: accessed 15 March 2011]
- "Marichiko"
Rexroth, K (trans) The Love Poems of Marichiko Translated by Kenneth Rexroth
Christopher's Books, Santa Barbara, 1978
- Marr, D 'Australia's Satanic Verses'
Spectrum, The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 August 1995, p 4
[<http://bit.ly/15eUzyh>: accessed 13 July 2013]
- McCaffery, L 'Faking Literature (review)'
Modernism/modernity, Volume 9, Number 1, January 2002, pp. 200-202
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 2002
- McCrum, R 'Plagiarism: in the words of someone else... there's little new in literature'
The Observer, 17 January 2010
[<http://bit.ly/13uPOtU>: accessed 12 July 2013]
- McHale, B 'Archaeologies of Knowledge: Hill's Middens, Heaney's Bogs, Schwerner's Tablets'
New Literary History, Vol. 30, No. 1, Poetry & Poetics (Winter,

- 1999), pp. 239-262
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1999
- Meyer, T-M Where Fiction Ends: Four Scandals of Literary Identity Construction
Vol. 3 of the ZAA Monograph Series
Königshausen & Neumann, Berlin, 2006
- Miller, L '4. The Case of the Double D' pp 73–148
'Plagiarism: The next generation'
Salon, 17 February 2010
[<http://bit.ly/19nuV0F>: accessed 25 June 2012]
- Mills, S The Quiddity of Will Self
Corsair, London, 2012
- Morgan, M Mutant Message Down Under
HarperCollins, New York, 1994 (1990)
- Morrison, B 'Reality Hunger: A Manifesto by David Shields'
The Guardian, 20 February 2010
- Moss, S 'The man behind the great Dickens and Dostoevsky hoax'
The Guardian, 11 July 2013
[<http://gu.com/p/3gf4e>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Musgrave, D Glissando: A Melodrama
Sleepers Publishing, Melbourne, 2010
- Mycak, S 'The authority of the "I": life stories and ethnic identity'
Quadrant Vol. 45, No. 4, April 2001, pp 21–26
- Nabokov, V Lolita
Olympia Press, Paris, 1955
Pale Fire
Penguin Modern Classics, London, 2001
- Naiman, E 'When Dickens met Dostoevsky'
The Times Literary Supplement, 10 April 2013
[<http://bit.ly/13QQLX6>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Nolan, M & Dawson, C Who's Who: Hoaxes, Imposture and Identity Crises in Australian Literature
Australian Literary Studies, Vol. 21, No. 4
University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2004
'Who's Who? Mapping Hoaxes and Imposture in Australian Literary History'
'Reading Carey Reading Malley' pp 28–39
'O'Grady, John see 'Culotta, Nino': Popular Authorship, Duplicity and Celebrity' pp 56–73
- Ashcroft, B 'The Company She Keeps: Demidenko and the Problems of Imposture in Autobiography' pp 14–27
- Carter, D 'On Not Being Australian: Mudrooroo and Demidenko' pp 89–100
- Egan, S 'Demidenko/Darville: A Ukrainian-Australian Point of View' p 111
- Goldie, T 'In His Own Sweet Time: Carmen's Coming Out', pp 134–149
- Mycak, S From a Distance: Australian Writers and Cultural Displacement
Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1996
- Nolan, M 'Performing Australian Ethnicity: "Helen Demidenko"'
- Ommundesen, W & Rowley, H 'Reality Hunger by David Shields'
The Observer, 28 February 2010
- Gunew, S 'The concept of Cary'
The Guardian, 21 May 2005
- O'Hagan, S 'Interview with Hsu-Ming Teo'
Peril Magazine, 25 June 2006
[<http://wp.me/ppea1-3d>: accessed 11 August 2013]
- Petit, C 'Imagine: How Creativity Works by Jonah Lehrer – a review'
The Guardian, 19 April 2012
- Pham, H
- Poole, S

- [<http://bit.ly/18q5hHS>: accessed 20 April 2012]
- Rapp, T ‘Sex, Drugs and Plagiarism: Did the New Star of German Literature Steal from a Blogger?’
Der Spiegel Online International, 17 February 2010
[<http://bit.ly/16FQtA2>: accessed 25 June 2012]
- Ritter, K ‘Yours, Mine and Ours: Triangulating Plagiarism, Forgery, and Identity’
JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture and Politics, Vol. 27.3-4, 2007, pp 731–743
- Robbins, P ‘A.D. Harvey in The Spectator — a little tribute to Eric Naiman’s ‘When Dickens met Dostoevsky’
The Spectator Blog, 19 April 2013
[<http://bit.ly/1brZpwR>: accessed 11 July 2013]
- Robilliard, A E & Fortune, R ‘Toward a New Content for Writing Courses: Literary Forgery, Plagiarism, and the Production of Belief’
JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture and Politics, Vol. 27.1-2, 2007, pp 185-210
- Rosenblum, J Practice to Deceive: The Amazing Stories of Literary Forgery’s Most Notorious Practices
Oak Knoll Press, New Castle DE, 2000
- Rosson III, L ‘Brian McHale on Literary Hoaxes’
The Busybody, 1 November 2005
[<http://bit.ly/10f5ury>: accessed 17 June 2013]
- ‘More on Literary Hoaxes’
The Busybody, 29 October 2005
[<http://bit.ly/11Y8oyD>: accessed 17 June 2013]
- Rooney, B Literary Activists: Writer-Intellectuals and Australian Public Life
University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2009
- de Rougemont, L The Adventures of Louis de Rougemont As Told By Himself With Forty-six Illustrations
George Newnes, London, 1899
- Rundle, G ‘Guy Rundle Replies to McKenzie Wark’
Meanjin, Vol. 56, No. 1, 1997, pp 209–215
- Ruthven, K K Faking Literature
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001
- Myth
Methuen, London, 1976
- Ryan, J & Thomas, A Cultures of Forgery: Making Nations Making Selves
Routledge, London, 2013 (2003)
- Ruthven, K K Faking Literature
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001
- Santé, L ‘The Fiction of Memory’
Sunday Book Review, The New York Times, 12 March 2010
[<http://nyti.ms/16KSJrz>: accessed 12 July 2013]
- Skidelsky, W ‘Latin America’s last literary outlaw’
The Observer, 11 January 2009
[<http://bit.ly/132aIIV>: accessed 16 January 2009]
- Shapton, L Important Artifacts and Personal Property From the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion and Jewelry
Bloomsbury, New York, 2009
- Shields, D Reality Hunger: A Manifesto
Hamish Hamilton, London, 2010
- Simons, M ‘How Windschuttle swallowed a hoax to publish a fake story in Quadrant’

- Crikey*: <http://www.crikey.com.au>
[<http://bit.ly/14uOUIH>: accessed 6 January 2009]
- Slotkin, R 'Fiction for the Purposes of History'
Rethinking History, Vol. 9, No. 2/3, June/September 2005, pp 221–236
Routledge, London, 2005
- Steele, H 'Fakes and Forgeries'
The British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Summer 1977), pp 254–258
Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Stewart, K "Those Infernal Pictures:" Reading Helen Darville, her novel and her critics'
Australian Literary Studies, Vol. 18, Issue 1, May 1997, p 72
- Strutton, B Island of Terrible Friends
W. W. Norton, New York, 1961
- Takolander, M & McCooey, D 'Fakes, Literary Identity and Public Culture'
Journal for the Association of the Study of Australian Literature, Vol. 3, 2004, pp 57–65
- Takolander, M 'Faking it for Real'
esc: English Studies in Canada, Vol. 31, Issue 2-3, June/Sept 2005, pp 307–325
ACCUTE (Association of Canadian Colleges and University Teachers of English), University of Alberta, Edmonton CA, 2005
- 'The unhallowed art: Literature and literary fakes in Australia'
TEXT Online Journal of Creative Writing, Special Issue No. 4, October 2011
[<http://bit.ly/16IoG1E>: accessed 2 July 2013]
- Tolstoy, L War and Peace
Vintage Classics, London, 2008 (1869)
Anna Karenina
Vintage Classics, London, 2010 (1877)
- Tranter, J 'Beware the Shibboleth: The Illusion of Authenticity' (originally published in *The Australian*, 1995), 17 February 2012
[<http://bit.ly/13NSSMB>: accessed 13 July 2013]
- Truss, L 'Me Cheeta: The Autobiography'
The Times Online, 5 October 2008
[<http://bit.ly/pRGPS2> : accessed 1 June 2010]
- Vice, S Holocaust Fiction
Routledge, London, 2000
- Welles, O '6. Historical polemic: Helen Darville, *The Hand that Signed the Paper*'
F for Fake
Janus Film/SACI, New York, 1973
- Weinberger, E 'At the Death of Kenneth Rexroth'
Works on Paper
New Directions Publishing, New York, 1986
- White, P Voss
Vintage, Sydney, 2012
- Widdicombe, L 'The Plagiarist's Tale'
Life and Letters, The New Yorker, 13 February 2012
[<http://nyr.kr/11Z8IAI>: accessed 15 February 2012]
- Williams, H 'My, what a beautiful navel I have'
The Independent, 3 February 2013
[<http://ind.pn/174bAMV>: accessed 10 May 2013]
- Wilson, K 'Holding up the mirror: Windschuttle, me, and the provocateur on trial'
Meanjin 2-2009, Winter: Vol. 68, No. 2, pp 42–50

- Wood, J [\[http://bit.ly/12m1mHE\]](http://bit.ly/12m1mHE)
 ‘Broken Record: A novel at war with itself’
The New Yorker, 21 May 2012, pp 74–76
 ‘True Lives: Sheila Heti’s *How Should a Person Be?*’
The New Yorker, 25 June 2012, pp 66-69
- Wu Ming Foundation [54](#)
 William Heinemann, London, 2005
Altai
 Verso Books, London, 2013
 ‘In Like Flynn’
Chicago Review, Vol. 52, Nos. 2/3/4
 University of Chicago, Chicago IL, 2006
<http://www.wumingfoundation.com/italiano/downloads.shtml>
 ‘Why not show off the about the best things?’
Giap Digest, 1 December 2002
[\http://bit.ly/16FNDuN: accessed 29 June 2013]
- Yourcenar, M
 (Frick, G, trans) Memoirs of Hadrian
 FSG Classics Series
 Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2005
- Xenophon, A
 (White, P ed.) Memoirs of Many in One
 Penguin, Ringwood, 1986

Narratology & Genre Studies

- Adorno, T Aesthetic Theory
 Continuum, New York, 2004
The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture
 Routledge, London, 2001
The Dialectic of Enlightenment (with Max Horkheimer)
 Verso, London, 1986
The Jargon of Authenticity
 Routledge, London, 2003
The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture
 Routledge, London, 2001
- Anderson, C Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy
 Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2006
- Aristotle Poetics (2nd Edition)
 Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, 1995
- Bakhtin, M The Dialogic Imagination
 University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981
 (Morris, P ed) The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings
 E Arnold, London, 1994
- Banfield, A Unspeakable Sentences
 The Law Book Company of Australia, Sydney, 1982
- Barnett, D ‘Science fiction and fantasy: the wonderful wizards of Oz’
The Guardian, 7 June 2013
[\http://bit.ly/18hrKXD: accessed 7 June 2013]
- Barnsley, J H ‘The White Hotel’
The Antioch Review, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Autumn 1982)
 Antioch College, Yellow Springs OH, 1982
- Berger, J About Looking
 Pantheon Books, New York, 1980
- Booth, W C The Rhetoric of Fiction

- University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1961
- Brooks, P Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative
Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, 1992
- Cohn, D 'Signposts of Fictionality: A Narratological Perspective'
Poetics Today, Vol. 11 No. 4: Narratology Revisited II
Duke University Press, Durham NC, Winter 1990
- Collini, S 'The Good of the Novel, edited by Liam McIlvanney and Ray Ryan'
The Guardian, 2 April 2011
- Crace, J 'In search of a good read'
The Guardian, 18 March 2010
[<http://bit.ly/17LiSJm> : accessed 20 March 2010]
- Culler, J 'Review: Problems in the Theory of Fiction'
Diacritics, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring 1984), pp 2–11
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1984
- Davis, L Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction
Methuen, New York, 1987
- Dawson, P 'The Return of Omniscience in Contemporary Fiction'
Narrative, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp 143–161
The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, 2009
- Even-Zohar, I 'Constraints of Realeme Insertability in Narrative'
Poetics Today, Vol. 1, No. 3, *Special Issue: Narratology I: Poetics of Fiction* (Spring 1980), pp. 65-74
- '"Reality" and Realemes in Narrative'
Poetics Today, Vol. 11, No. 1, *Polysystem Studies* (Spring 1990),
pp. 207-218
Duke University Press, Durham North Carolina
- Forster, E M Aspects of the Novel
Penguin, London, 1990 (originally published Edward Arnold,
London, 1927)
- Gibson, W 'Authors, Speakers, Readers and Mock Readers'
College English, Vol. 11, No. 5 (Feb 1950)
National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, 1950
- Grenville, K & Woolfe, S Making Stories: How Ten Australian Novels Were Written
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001
- Hendrix, J 'Presentfreude and the Booker'
Page-Turner, The New Yorker, 15 September 2010
[<http://nyr.kr/18WrE7k>: accessed 20 September 2010]
- Hrushovski (Harshaw), B *Poetics Today*, Vol. 5, No. 2: *The Construction of Reality in Fiction*
The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University
Duke University Press, Durham North Carolina, 1984
- 'Fictionality and Fields of Reference: Remarks on a Theoretical Framework': pp 227–251
- 'Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference'
Poetics Today, Vol. 5, No. 1
Duke University Press, Durham North Carolina, 1984
- Hutcheon, L Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox
Methuen, London and New York, 1984
- James, H The Art of the Novel
Scribner, New York, 1957
- Lea, R 'Very now: Has present-tense narration really taken over fiction?'
The Guardian Books Blog, 14 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/1amcczj>: accessed 19 September 2010]
- Lethem, J 'The Ecstasy of Influence: A plagiarism'
Harper's Magazine, February 2007

- Lodge, D The Art of Fiction
Penguin, London, 1992
- McCormack, P Moral Knowledge and Fiction
The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 41, No. 4
(Summer 1983), pp 399–410
Blackwell Publishing (On behalf of The American Society for
Aesthetics), London, 1983
- McIlvenney, L &
Ryan, R The Good of the Novel
Faber & Faber, London, 2011
- Miller, L ‘The fierce fight over the present tense’
Salon, 22 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/10UWDf3>: accessed 13 July 2013]
- Prince, G The Dictionary of Narratology (Revised Edition)
University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln NE, 2003
- Pullman, P ‘Philip Pullman calls time on the present tense’
The Guardian, 18 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/z6witW>: accessed 19 September 2010]
- Ong, W J ‘The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction’
PMLA, Vol. 90, No. 1, January 1975
Modern Language Association, New York
- Ricoeur, P ‘Narrative Time’
Critical Inquiry, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Autumn 1980)
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980
- Rimmon-Keenan, S Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics (2nd Edition)
Routledge, London, 2002
- Roberts, L ‘Philip Pullman and Philip Hensher criticise Booker Prize for including
present tense novels’
The Telegraph, 11 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/141Fe7I>: accessed 19 September 2010]
- Robson, L ‘The Good of the Novel’
New Statesman, 5 May 2011
[<http://bit.ly/1181tTo>: accessed 6 May 2011]
- Safran Foer, J Everything is Illuminated
Popular Penguins, Ringwood, 2008 (2003)

Postmodernism, Post-colonialism, Cultural Studies and Identity

- Alcoff, L ‘The Problem of Speaking for Others’
Cultural Critique, No. 20, Winter 1991–1992, pp 5–32
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1991–1992
- Anderson, S ‘Boundary Issues’
Books, New York Magazine, 7 March 2010
[<http://nym.ag/13OckYU>: accessed 7 March 2010]
- Ang, I ‘On Not Speaking Chinese’
Routledge, NY, 2002
(References taken from *New Formations*)
- Ashcroft, Griffiths,
Tiffin (eds) The Post-colonial Studies Reader
Routledge, London, 1995
- Bhabha, H ‘Signs Taken for Wonders’
- Chakravorty Spivak, G ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’
- Baker, S The Fiction of Postmodernity
University of Edinburgh Press, Edinburgh, 2000
- Barthes, R Critical Essays

- ‘Literature Today: Answers to a Questionnaire in Tel Quel’ pp 151–161
Northwestern University Press, Evanston IL, 2000 (1972)
- Baudrillard, J
(Glaser, S, trans) ‘The Precession of Simulacra’ from
Simulacres et Simulation
University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1994 [Eng.
trans]
- Boyd, M The Reflexive Novel: Fiction as Critique
Associated University Presses, London & Toronto, 1983
- Boyle, D Authenticity: Brands, Fakes, Spin and the Lust for Real Life’
Flamingo, London, 2003
- Bunia, R ‘Diagnosis and Representation: Beyond the Fictional World, on the
Margins of Story and Narrative’
Poetics Today, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2010, pp 679–720
- Cheng, V Inauthentic: The Anxiety over Culture and Identity
Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick NJ, 2004
- Clarke, B ‘The Novel is Dead, Long Live the Novel’
The Virginia Quarterly Review, Summer 2006, pp 162–177
- Deleuze, G Difference and Repetition
Athlone Press, London, 1994
- de Botton, A The Romantic Movement: Sex, Shopping and the Novel
Picador, London, 1995
- de Botton, A Status Anxiety
Hamish Hamilton, London, 2004
- Eagleton, T Literary Theory: An Introduction
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996 (1984)
- Forgacs, D ‘Literary Theory: An Introduction by Terry Eagleton’
Poetics Today, Vol. 5, No. 2, *The Construction of Reality in Fiction*
(1984), pp. 429-433
- Forster, E M ‘Anonymity: An inquiry’
The Atlantic Monthly, November 1925, p 588
- Frow, J ‘Australian Cultural Studies: Theory, Story, History’
Australian Humanities Review 37, December 2005
Australian National University, ACT, 2005
[<http://bit.ly/186k1Z9>: accessed 8 July 2012]
Cultural Studies and Cultural Value
Clarendon Press, Oxford [Oxford University Press, New York]
1995
- Genette, G Fiction and Diction
Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1993 (1991)
- Porter, C (trans) Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997 (1987)
- Gilroy, P Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness
London, Verso, 1993
- Hensher, P ‘Opinion: The Booker judges should take a stand against modish present
tense’
The Telegraph, 9 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/1597y5T>: accessed 19 September 2010]
- Holland, N. N. Dynamics of Literary Response
Columbia University Press, New York, 1989
(originally published WW Norton & Co, New York, 1968)
- Iser, W The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction
from Bunyan to Beckett
Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1974
- Herman, D,
Jahn, M &
Ryan, M-L (eds) The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative Theory
Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2005

- Hutcheon, L A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction
Routledge, New York, 1988
Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox
Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo ON, 1980
- Knox, M 'Fiction as reality check'
Books, The Sydney Morning Herald, 14 January 2006
[<http://bit.ly/1bobqG0>: accessed 16 January 2006]
- Lamb, K Peter Carey: The Genesis of Fame
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1992
- Lasch, C The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations
W W Norton & Company, New York, 1979
The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times
W W Norton & Company, New York, 1984
- Lawrence, D. H. Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine and Other Essays
Centaur Press, Philadelphia, 1925
- Leitch, V Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism
Columbia University Press, New York NY, 1992
- Lindholm, C Culture and Authenticity
Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008
- McHale, B Postmodernist Fiction
Methuen, London, 1987
'History and Criticism by Dominick LaCapra'
Poetics Today, Vol. 7, No. 3: *Poetics of Fiction*, pp 595–594
Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1986
- Miller, W I Faking It
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003
- Minh-Ha, T. T. Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism
Indiana University Press, Indianapolis IN, 1989
- Morrison, E 'Are books dead, and can authors survive?'
The Guardian, 23 August 2011
[<http://bit.ly/18oKz7m>: accessed 25 August 2011]
- O'Hagan, S 'A family touched by madness'
The Observer, 28 August 2005
[<http://bit.ly/1438aas>: accessed 23 November 2008]
- Potter, A The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves
HarperCollins, New York, 2010
- Pullman, P 'Philip Pullman calls time on the present tense'
The Guardian, 18 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/z6witW>: accessed 19 September 2010]
- Roberts, L 'Philip Pullman and Philip Hensher criticise Booker Prize for including present tense novels'
The Telegraph, 11 September 2010
[<http://bit.ly/141Fe7I>: accessed 19 September 2010]
- Roof, J & Wiegman, R Who Can Speak?: Authority and Critical Identity
University of Illinois Press, Champaign IL, 1995
- Callaghan, D 'The Vicar and the Virago: Feminism and the Problem of Identity' pp 195–205
- Rushdie, S Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 – 1991
Granta/Penguin, London, 1992
- Shillingsburg, P L Resisting Texts: Authority and Submission in Constructions of Meaning, pp 160–164
University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor MI, 1997
- Stephenson, W 'American Jeremiad: A Manifesto'
The New York Times, 23 March 2010
[<http://nyti.ms/13ct8FC>: accessed 29 March 2010]

- Tenner, E 'Writers, Technology, and the Future'
The Wilson Quarterly, Autumn 2012
- Teo, H-M Behind the Moon
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005
- Turner, G 'Australian Literature and the Public Sphere': Keynote Address
Association for the Study of Australian Literature, *21st ASAL Literature*, Vol. 3, 2004, pp 57–65
- Thomas, D M The White Hotel
Gollancz, London, 1980
- Truss, L 'Me Cheeta: The Autobiography'
The Times Online, 5 October 2008
[<http://bit.ly/pRGPS2> : accessed 1 June 2010]
- Watts, C The Deceptive Text: Covert Plot and Transtextuality in Works by Conrad and Others
Harvester Press, Brighton, 1984

Other References

- Ashbery, J Litany from As We Know: Poems
Viking Press, New York, 1979
- Badami, S 'From the Emergency'
Verity La, 17 April 2011
[<http://bit.ly/S6WKQm>: 18 April 2011]
- (Pung, A, ed) Growing Up Asian in Australia
Black Inc, Melbourne, 2008
- Batuman, E 'Get a real degree'
London Review of Books, Vol. 32, No. 8, 23 September 2010
pp3–8
- Bellow, S The Adventures of Augie March
Penguin Classics, London, 2006
- Bennett-Daylight, T 'A phone call to Helen Garner'
Review, The Australian, 3 November 2012
- Blundell, N (ed.) The World's Greatest Scandals of the 20th Century
Hamlyn, London, 1994
- Boccaccio, G The Decameron
Harmondsworth, London, 1972
- Bolonik, K 'Montaigne, Ben-Hur, and JFK: Gore Vidal talks with *Bookforum*'
Bookforum Dec/Jan 2007
[<http://bit.ly/12YsnR9>: accessed 23 January 2011]
- Borges, JL Labyrinths and Other Stories
Penguin, London, 2000
- (Hurley, A, ed.) On Exactitude in Science from
Collected Fictions Vol. 3
Viking, New York, 1998, p 325
- Bosely, D A Kind of Warfare: Portrait of a Serial Seducer
Duck Editions, London, 2000
- Brontë, C Jane Eyre
Wordsworth Classics, London, 1992 (1842)
- van Buitenen, JAB (trans) The Mahabharata
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973
- Bulgakov, M The Master and Margarita
Penguin Pocket Classics, London, 2006 (1967)

- Burgess, A A Clockwork Orange
William Heinemann, London, 1962
- Earthly Powers
Penguin, London, 1981
- Burton, R (trans) Vikram and the Vampire: Classic Indian Tales of Adventure, Magic and Romance
[<http://bit.ly/GDNefE>: accessed 22 March 2012]
- The Thousand and One Nights
HS Nichols, London, 1897
- Calderon de la Barca, P trans. FitzGerald, E La vida es sueño (Life is a dream)
Project Gutenberg, Salt Lake City, 2006
[<http://bit.ly/IcVbMl> : accessed 10 April 2012]
- Cameron, R ‘Police meet their match in phantom of the bush’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 December 2011
[<http://bit.ly/1cteUYi>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Canning, V The Burning Eye
Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1959
- Carlyle, T ‘The proposed London library’
The Examiner, 28 June 1840, p 408
- Cervantes, M Don Quixote
Penguin Classics, London, 2003
- Chaucer, G The Canterbury Tales
Allen Lane, London, 1977
- Barlow, A (exec. prod) *Balibo*
Connolly, R (dir.) Arenafilm, Melbourne, 2009
- Cunningham, M The Hours
Fourth Estate, London, 1999
- Daisley, S Traitor
Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2011
- de Mandeville, B The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits
J Tonson, London, 1724
- Demick, B ‘The Orphan Master’s Son by Adam Johnson – review’
The Guardian, 18 February 2012
- Desani, G V All About H. Hatterr
Modern Classics, Penguin, London, 1972
- Diaz, J The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
Faber and Faber, London, 2008
- Dickens, C Bleak House
Penguin Classics, London, 1986 (1852)
- Drewe, R [ed] Best Australian Stories 2007
Black Inc, Melbourne, 2007
- The Savage Crows
Penguin, Ringwood, 2001 (1976)
- Dyer, J *Reading Life: ‘An Academic Author’s Unintentional Masterpiece’*
The New York Times, 22 July 2011
[<http://nyti.ms/1aQezsp>: accessed 22 July 2011]
- Out of Sheer Rage: Wrestling with D H Lawrence
Canongate Books, Edinburgh, 2009
- Egan, J A Visit From the Goon Squad
Corsair, London, 2011
- Eiriksson, L Egil’s Saga
Penguin, London, 2004
- Eliot, T S The Wasteland (Norton Critical Editions)
W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2000
- Enright, A ‘Ten Rules for Writing Fiction, Part One’
Franzen, J (et al) *The Guardian*, 20 February 2010

- Evaristo, B Blonde Roots
Hamish Hamilton, London, 2008
- FitzGerald, E The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam (1st and 2nd Editions)
Collins Publishers, London, [date unknown]
- Fitzgerald, F S The Beautiful and Damned
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008 [originally Scribner, New York, 1922]
The Great Gatsby
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991 [originally Scribner, New York, 1925]
Tender is the Night
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012 [originally Scribner, New York, 1934]
This Side of Paradise
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996 [originally Scribner, New York, 1920]
- Fitzgerald, Z S Save Me the Waltz
Vintage Classics, London, 2001 [originally Scribner, New York, 1932]
- Flaubert, G Madame Bovary
Wordsworth Classics, London, 1993
- Flora, P Vivat Vamp!
Dennis Dobson, London, 1958
- Francis, R Ann the Word: The Story of Ann Lee, Female Messiah, Mother of the Shakers, The Woman Clothed with the Sun
4th Estate, London, 2001
- Franzen, J The Corrections
4th Estate, London, 2002 (originally published Monacelli Press, New York, 1999)
Freedom
4th Estate, London, 2010
- Fuentes, C Terra nostra
Penguin, London, 1978
- Gaddis, W The Recognitions
Penguin Classics, Penguin, 1962
- George, A (trans) The Epic of Gilgamesh
Penguin, London, 2003
- Gessen, K Vanity Fair's How A Book is Born: The Making of The Art of Fielding
Vanity Fair, New York, NY, 2011
- Gianopoulos, P 'Philip Roth: A eulogy for a living man'
Salon, 11 November 2012
[<http://bit.ly/15VT0WK>: accessed 13 November 2012]
- Gleeson-White, J 'The love that dare not speak its name: we need to talk about editing'
Overland Online, 28 April 2010
[<http://bit.ly/11orqN7>: accessed 28 April 2010]
- Gogol, N Dead Souls
Penguin Classics, London, 2004
- Gutch, R (exec. prod) *Snowtown*
Screen Australia, Sydney, 2011
- Kurzel, J (dir.) The I That is Us: Heteronymy and Poetry
Mnemosyne Books, London, 1968
- Hargendor, W. W. Memory: An Anthology
Vintage, London, 2008
- Harvey Wood, H & Byatt, A. S. *Holmes, R*
'A Meander Through Memory and Forgetting'

- Homes, A. M. May We Be Forgiven
Granta Books, London, 2012
- House, L (exec. prod) *Kokoda*
Australian Film Finance Corporation et. al, Sydney, 2006
- Grierson, A (dir.) *The Kills* (Sutler, *The Massive*, *The Kill*, *The Hit*)
House, R
Pan Macmillan, London, 2013
[<http://bit.ly/161OQ16>: accessed 20 July 2013]
- Hughes, R ‘Thomas Keneally Full interview transcript’ Tape 10
[<http://bit.ly/1387VJh>: accessed 15 June 2013]
- Humphries, D ‘Live here and be Australian, Howard declares’
The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 February 2006
[<http://bit.ly/16G1Yr0>: accessed 09 November 2009]
- Hyde, H M Oscar Wilde: A Biography
Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York, 1973
- Jaivin, L ‘The cheap thrills of fan fiction: the slash pile’
Nation Reviewed, *The Monthly*, No. 88, April 2013, pp 47–49
- Katwala, S ‘Fact or fiction?’
The Observer Debate, *The Observer*, 27 May 2001
[<http://bit.ly/1b3MmDW>: accessed 14 April 2011]
- Krauth, N ‘Evolution of the exegesis: the radical trajectory of the creative writing doctorate in Australia’
TEXT Online Journal of Creative Writing, April 2011
[<http://bit.ly/11eZaNQ>: accessed 2 June 2013]
- Keeling, J ‘The Moment Unravels: Reading John Ashbery’s “Litany”’
Twentieth Century Literature, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Summer, 1992) pp 125-151
Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY, 1991
- Maral, L ‘Warts and all: on writing “The Secret River”’
University of Sydney News, 26 August 2006
[<http://bit.ly/13YXEXv>: accessed 20 June 2013]
- Marr, A ‘Death of the novel’
The Observer, 27 May 2001
[<http://gu.com/p/xd32z>: accessed 14 April 2011]
- Maugham, W S The Painted Veil (Film Edition)
Vintage, London, 2007
- McAvoy, J (exec. prod) *Being Lara Bingle*
Channel Ten Television, Sydney, 2012
- McCrum, R ‘Another premature obituary’
World of books, *The Observer*, 27 May 2001
[<http://bit.ly/14u7r6S>: accessed 14 April 2011]
‘Why Lee Siegel is wrong to declare the death of the novel’
Robert McCrum on books, *The Observer*, 5 July 2010
[<http://gu.com/p/2t6c8>: accessed 7 July 2010]
- McEwen, I ‘Hello, would you like a free book?’
The Guardian, 20 September 2005
[<http://bit.ly/1aJ2MOR>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- McInerney, J ‘Jay McInerney: why Gatsby is so great’
The Observer, 10 June 2012
[<http://bit.ly/18dNcNb>: accessed 08 June 2013]
- Miller, E M Pressmen and Governors: Australian editors and writers in early Tasmania; a contribution to the history of the Australian press and literature with notes biographical and bibliographical
Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1973
- Mitchell, D Ghostwritten
Sceptre, London, 2001

- Cloud Atlas
Sceptre, London, 2004
- Mordue, M 'Is the novel dead?'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 January 2003
[<http://bit.ly/15esK8Z>: accessed 14 April 2011]
- Morrison, B South of the River
Viking, London, 2008 (originally published Chatto & Windus, London, 2007)
- Morrison, E 'Are books dead, and can authors survive?'
The Guardian, 23 August 2011
[<http://gu.com/p/3xct5>: accessed 25 August 2011]
- Nunberg, G 'Our False Beliefs About Language'
[review of Grammar Grouches, Language Laws & the Politics of Identity, R L Greene, Delacorte Press, New York, NY, 2011]
The New York Times, 1 April 2011
[<http://bit.ly/18GPPUp> : accessed 3 April 2011]
- Oakley, B [ed] Families: Modern Australian Stories Volume VI
Five Mile Press, Scoresby, 2008
- Orwell, G Nineteen Eighty-Four
Penguin Classics, London, 2013 (1949)
- O'Toole, G 'Good Artists Copy; Great Artists Steal'
Quote Investigator, 6 March 2013
[<http://bit.ly/14H0FMH>: accessed 6 June 2013]
- Davenport Adams, W H* 'Imitators and Plagiarists (Part 2 of 2)'
The Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. 272, June 1892, p 613 (627–628)
- Partridge, E The Concise Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English
Routledge, London, 1937-2008
- Beale, P
Dalzell, T
Victor, T et al (eds.)
Plumpton, G et al (eds.) *The Paris Review*
The Paris Review, Jackson, MS
- Ashbery, J 'The Art of Poetry, No. 33'
Stitt, P A Winter 1983, No. 90
- Carey, P 'The Art of Fiction, No. 188'
Jones, R Summer 2006, No. 188
- Munro, A 'The Art of Fiction, No. 137'
McCullough, J Summer 1994, No. 131
- Simpson, M*
Murray, L 'The Art of Poetry, No. 89'
O'Driscoll, D Spring 2005, No. 173
- Simenon, G 'The Art of Fiction, No. 9'
Collins, C Summer 1955, No. 9
- Phipson, J The Watcher in the Garden
Text Classics, Melbourne, 2013
- Porter, P 'Satires in C Minor'
- Craven, P (ed) Best Australian Essays 2003
Black Inc, Melbourne, 2003
- Pryor, L 'A novel idea turns creative writing into an academic racket'
The Sydney Morning Herald, 27 February 2010
- Ramsey Ullman, J Windam's Way
Collins, London, 1952
- Ray, C (exec. prod) *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*
E! Entertainment Network, Los Angeles (2007–)
- The Reader's Digest Association Limited The Reader's Digest Book of Strange Stories, Amazing Facts
The Reader's Digest Association Limited, Surry Hills, 1975

- Richardson, S Pamela
Wordsworth Classics, London, 2008
- Rekulak, J, Grahame-Smith, G & Winters, B Pride and Prejudice and Zombies
Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters
Android Karenina
Quirk Books, Philadelphia, 2009
- Robb, B 12 Adventures of the Celebrated Baron Munchausen, selected and illustrated by Brian Robb
Peter Lunn, London, 1947
- Room, A Dictionary of Pseudonyms: 13,000 Assumed Names and their Origins (Fifth Edition)
McFarland, Jefferson NC, 2010
- Roth, P American Pastoral
Vintage, New York, 1998 (1997)
- Thorpe, V ‘Salman Rushdie says TV dramas comparable to novels’
The Observer, 12 June 2011
[<http://gu.com/p/2q4qj>: accessed 15 June 2011]
- Salinger, J Franny and Zooey
Heinemann, London, 1962
- Savery, H Quintus Servinton
Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1962 (1830, Hobart)
World of books, *The Observer*, 27 May 2001
- Shine Australia (exec. prod) The Shire
Channel 10 Television, Sydney, 2012
- Sterne, L Tristram Shandy
Visual Editions, London, 2011
- Siegel, L ‘Where Have All the Mailers Gone?’
The Last Critic, *The New York Observer*, 22 June 2010
[<http://nyob.co/13iLK5Q>: accessed 7 July 2010]
- Swift, J & Saintsbury, G Polite Conversation in Three Dialogues (with introduction and notes by George Saintsbury)
Charles Wittingham & Co, Chiswick Press, London, 1892
- Tosches, N King of the Jews
Hamish Hamilton, London, 2005
- Tsoilkas, C The Slap
Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2009
- Turner, A ‘Why do movies look so fake on my new HDTV?’
‘Gadgets on the go’ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 2013
[<http://bit.ly/186j2bk>: accessed 10 July 2013]
- Watson, D ‘The Nation Reviewed: Education’
The Monthly, Summer Reading Special December 2011–January 2012, pp 10–12
- White, P The Twyborn Affair
Jonathon Cape, London, 1979
- Wilde, O Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal
Mondial, New York, 2006 (1893)
- Williamson, G The Burning Library: Our Great Novelists Lost and Found
Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2012
- Winnicott, D W Playing and Reality
Routledge Classics, Routledge, Abingdon UK, 2005
- Womersley, C Bereft
Scribe Publishing, Melbourne, 2011
- Woolfe, V Mrs Dalloway
Oxford University Press, New York, 2000
- Wright, A ‘The Politics and Art of Authenticity’ pp 126–137
Chance, I (ed.) *Kaltja Now: Indigenous Arts Australia*

- Wakefield Press, Kent Town, in association with the National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Tandanya, 2001
- Wroe, N 'James Patterson: a life in writing'
The Guardian, 11 May 2013
[<http://bit.ly/163YyiP>: accessed 11 June 2013]
- Wyndham, S 'Life and art collide'
Undercover Blog, The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 March 2008
[<http://bit.ly/12JLk5X>: accessed 12 July 2013]
- Wyndham, V The Sphinx and Her Circle
André Deutsch, London, 1963

History, Society & Culture: Australia

- Boileau, J Families of Fortune: Chinese People in the Tweed
Tweed River Regional Museum / Tweed Shire Council,
Murwillumbah, 2009
- Burgmann, E H The Education of an Australian
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1944
- Boyd, R The Australian Ugliness
Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2010
- Chauncy, N They Found a Cave
Text Classics, Melbourne, 2013
- Charlwood, D All the Green Year
Text Classics, Melbourne, 2012
- Conway, R The Great Australian Stupor: An interpretation of the Australian way of life
Sun Books, Melbourne, 1971
- Cusack, D Picnic Races
Allen and Unwin House of Books, Crows Nest, 2012
- Dark, E Lantana Lane
Allen and Unwin House of Books, Crows Nest, 2012
- Davison, F D Children of the Dark People: An Australian Folk Tale
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1948
- Grant, J Kylie Tennant: A Life
National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2005
- Hornadge, B A Squint Down Under
Review Publications, Dubbo, 1971
The Ugly Australian: Unkind Quotes collected by Bill Hornadge
Bacchus Books, Sydney, 1976
- Humphries, B & Garland, N Bazza Comes into His Own
Sun Books, Melbourne, 1979
- Ingram, T A Matter of Taste
Collins, Sydney, 1976
- Lake, M, Reynolds, H et. al. What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History
University of NSW Press, Kensington, 2010
- Latta, D Lost Glories: A Memorial to Forgotten Australian Buildings
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1986
- McGregor, W & Thieberger, N Macquarie Aboriginal Words
The Macquarie Library, North Ryde, 2005
- Marsh, B "Swampy" Goldie: Adventures in a Vanishing Australia
ABC Books, Sydney, 2008
- Masters, O The Home Girls
Text Classics, Melbourne, 2012

- Moore, B Speaking Our Language
Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2008
- Nairn, B &
Serle, G (eds) The Australian Dictionary of Biography
Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981
- Neville, R Hippie Hippie Shake: The Dreams, The Trips, The Trials, The Love-Ins,
The Screw Ups, The Sixties
Bloomsbury, London, 1995
- NSW Aboriginal Welfare Board
Dawn & New Dawn 1952-1975 [DVD Library]
Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1999me
- Pinkney, J Great Australian Mysteries 2
Five Mile Press, Melbourne, 2006
- Reader's Digest Australia's Yesterdays: A Look at Our Recent Past
Reader's Digest Australia, Surry Hills, 1974
- Rudd, S On Our Selection: The Original Dad & Dave Stories
University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1995
- Santich, B Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage
Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 2012
- Sekules, P A Handful of Hacks
Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1999
- Shute, N A Town Like Alice
Pan Books, London, 1968
- Special Services Division, Instructions for American Servicemen in Australia 1942
Services of Supply, Viking, Ringwood, 2006
United States Army (facsimile from War and Navy Departments, Washington DC, 1942
edition)
- Stanley, P Bad Characters: Sex, crime, mutiny, murder and the Australian
Imperial Force
Murdoch Books / Pier 9, Sydney, 2010
- Stowe, R The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea
Penguin, Ringwood, 1968
- Travers, R Australian Mandarin: The Life and Times of Quong Tart
Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1981
- Twain, M Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World
Courier Dover Publications, Mineola, 1989
(facsimile from American Publishing Company, Hartford, 1897
edition)
Pudd'nhead Wilson (Those Extraordinary Twins)
Charles L Webster and Company, New York, 1894
- Webby, E The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000
- van Toorn, P 'Indigenous Texts and narratives' pp 19-49
- Wilton, J Golden Threads: The Chinese in Regional New South Wales 1850-
1950
New England Regional Art Museum in conjunction with
Powerhouse Publishing, Armidale and Haymarket, 2004

History, Society & Culture: Sydney

- Blaikie, G Remember Smith's Weekly? A Biography of An Uninhibited
National Australian Newspaper
Rigby Limited, Sydney, 1966
- Brodsky, I Heart of the Rocks of Old Sydney
Old Sydney Free Press, Sydney, 1965

- The Streets of Sydney
Old Sydney Free Press, Sydney, 1961
- Sydney's Phantom Bookshops
Co-operative Bookshop, Sydney, 1973
- Butel, E & Kings Cross Album: Pictorial Memories of Kings Cross, Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo & Rushcutters Bay
Atrand, Crows Nest, 1984
- Butler-Bowden, C Shooting Through: Sydney By Tram
Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney, 2009
- "Caddie" (C B Edmonds) Caddie: The Autobiography of a Sydney Barmaid
Constable, London, 1953
- Cossu, A A Place in the Rocks
Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney 2008
- Clune, F Scandals of Old Sydney Town
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1957
- Cunneen, C William John McKell: Boilermaker, Premier, Governor-General
UNSW Press, Kensington, 2000
- Cusack, D & Come in Spinner
HarperCollins, Sydney, 2013
- James, F
- Geeves, P with Cazneux's Sydney 1904-1934
The David Ell Press, Sydney, 1980
- Newton, G
- Gill, L My Town: Sydney in the 1930s
State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1993
- Butel, E & Kings Cross Album: Pictorial Memories of Kings Cross, Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo & Rushcutters Bay
Atrand, Crows Nest, 1984
- Hall, S Tabloid Man: The Life and Times of Ezra Norton
4th Estate, Sydney, 2008
- Holden, R Crackpots, Ratbags and Rebels: A Swag of Aussie Eccentrics
ABC Books, Sydney, 2005
- Hornadge, B A Squint Down Under
Review Publications, Dubbo, 1971
- The Ugly Australian: Unkind Quotes collected by Bill Hornadge
Bacchus Books, Sydney, 1976
- Horrocks, R Len Lye: A Biography
Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2001
- Hughes, R Things I Didn't Know: A Memoir
Vintage, London, 2007
- Ingram, T A Matter of Taste
Collins, Sydney, 1976
- Jervis, J J & Parramatta Pageant
Oswald Ziegler Productions for Parramatta City Council,
Parramatta, 1960
- Ziegler, O
- Karksens, G Inside the Rocks
Hale & Iremonger, Alexandria, 2000
- The Colony
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2009
- Kings Cross Community Aid & Information Service
Kings Cross 1936 – 1946
Kings Cross Community Aid & Information Service, Potts Point,
1981
- Kirkpatrick, P The Sea Coast of Bohemia: Literary Life in Sydney's Roaring Twenties
Australian Public Intellectual Network Books, Perth, 2007
- Latta, D Lost Glories: A Memorial to Forgotten Australian Buildings
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1986
- Lawrence, J & Pictorial History of the Eastern Suburbs

- Sharpe, A King's Clear Books, Alexandria, 1999
- Mackanness, C & Sydney: Then and Now
Butler-Bowden, C Cameron House / Salamander Books, Wingfield SA, 2007
- Marshall, S Luna Park: Just For Fun
Luna Park Reserve Trust, Milsons Point, 1995
- Miklis, C The Eccentropaedia: The Most Unusual People Who Have Ever Lived
Headpress, London, 2012
- Morgan, A 'Lost City of the Senses'
SCAN Journal of media arts culture: "The Glittering Tart:" Imaging Sydney
Media Department, Macquarie University, Ryde,
http://scan.net.au/scan/magazine/display.php?journal_id=5
[accessed 21 May 2013]
- Murray, L Ethnic Radio
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1977
- Nairn, B & The Australian Dictionary of Biography
Serle, G (eds) Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981
- NSW Aboriginal Welfare Board *Dawn & New Dawn 1952-1975 [DVD Library]*
Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1999me
- NSW Government Printing Office Priceless Pictures from the remarkable NSW Government Printing Collection
NSW Government Printing Office, Ultimo, 1988
- NSW Steam Tram and Preservation Society In and Around Sydney with Steam Tram, Books 1-4
- O'Keefe, D O'Keefe's Guide to Sydney Pubs
Daniel O'Keefe Publications, Mosman, 1975
- Park, R The Companion Guide to Sydney
Collins, Sydney, 1973
- Pearl, C Poor Man's Orange
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1949
- Pearson, M M Wild Men of Sydney
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1977
- Rosen, S Tales of Rowe Street
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1947
- Ruhen, O & We never had a hotbed of crime!: Life in twentieth-century South Sydney
White, U Hale & Iremonger, Alexandria, 2000
- Sekules, P The Rocks of Sydney
Rigby, Sydney, 1966
- Simpson, C & A Handful of Hacks
Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1999
- Lambert, A *SCAN Journal of media arts culture: "The Glittering Tart:" Imaging Sydney*
Media Department, Macquarie University, Ryde,
http://scan.net.au/scan/magazine/display.php?journal_id=5
[accessed 21 May 2013]
- Lambert, A Screening Sydney: A Select Filmography
http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display_information.php?j_id=4
[accessed 21 May 2013]
- Slessor, K Backless Betty from Bondi
(with Croft, J) Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1983
- (with Reilly, V) Darlinghurst Nights
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1981

- The Grapes Are Growing: The Story of Australian Wine
Australian Wine Board, Sydney, 1965
- Bread and Wine: Selected Prose
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1970
- Special Services Division, Instructions for American Servicemen in Australia 1942
Services of Supply, Viking, Ringwood, 2006
United States Army (facsimile from War and Navy Departments, Washington DC, 1942 edition)
- Stowe, R The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea
Penguin, Ringwood, 1968
- Tennant, K Fouveaux
Sirius Publishing, Sydney, 1946
Ma Jones and the Little White Cannibals
Macmillan, London, 1967
Ride on Stranger
Macmillan, New York, 1943
- White, U & The Rocks of Sydney
Ruhlen, O Rigby, Sydney, 1966
White, U & Sydney Harbour Sketchbook
Sriber, C Rigby, Sydney, 1968
Wilton, J Golden Threads: The Chinese in Regional New South Wales 1850-1950
New England Regional Art Museum in conjunction with
Powerhouse Publishing, Armidale and Haymarket, 2004

History, Society & Culture: Sydney Bohemians & Eccentrics

- Atkinson, A (ed) Footnote People in Australian History
Fairfax Library, Sydney, 1987
- Cavendish O'Neil, P A Lion in the Bedroom: The Fabulous High Life of the Heiress Who
Couldn't Say No
(with S Gare) Media 21 Publishing, South Africa, 2004
- Childs, K The Prince of Australia (and other Rebels, Rogues and Ratbags)
Lothian Books, Sydney, 2006
- Coombs, A Sex and Anarchy: The Life and Death of the Sydney Push
Viking / Penguin, Ringwood, 1996
- Creswell, T & 1001 Australians You Should Know
Trenoweth, S Pluto Press, North Melbourne, 2006
- Dimond, J & Literary Sydney: A Walking Guide
Kirkpatrick, P Queensland University Press, Brisbane, 2000
Deamer, D The Queen of Bohemia
University of Queensland Press, 1998
- Drury, N The Witch of Kings Cross: The Life and Magic of Rosaleen Norton
Kingsclear Books, Alexandria, 2002
- Dutton, G Kenneth Slessor: A Biography
Viking, Ringwood, 1991
- Everingham, S Gordon Barton: Australia's Maverick Entrepreneur
Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2009
Madam Lash: Gretel Pininger's scandalous life of sex, art and
bondage
Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2010
- Everage, E My Gorgeous Life: The Life, The Loves, The Legend
(with H Humphries) Macmillan, Sydney, 1994
- Garling, J Australian Notes on the Ballet

- Legend Press, Sydney, 1950
- Grant, J Kylie Tennant: A Life
National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2005
- Gray, O Exit Left: Memoirs of a Scarlet Woman
Penguin, Scoresby, 1985
- Holden, R Crackpots, Ratbags and Rebels: A Swag of Aussie Eccentrics
ABC Books, Sydney, 2005
- Horrocks, R Len Lye: A Biography
Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2001
- Hughes, R Things I Didn't Know: A Memoir
Vintage, London, 2007
- Horrocks, R Len Lye: A Biography
Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2001
- Humphries, B Handling Edna: The Unauthorised Biography
Hachette, Sydney 2009
- Irving, T &
Cahill, R Radical Sydney: Places, Portraits and Unruly Episodes
UNSW Press, Kensington, 2010
- James, C Unreliable Memoirs
WW Norton, New York, 2009 (1980)
- Kirkpatrick, P The Sea Coast of Bohemia: Literary Life in Sydney's Roaring Twenties
Australian Public Intellectual Network Books, Perth, 2007
- Kramer, E Walkabout Dancer
Trafford Publications, Bloomington, IN, 2008 [self-published]
- Lindsay, J Life Rarely Tells: An autobiography in three volumes
Penguin, Ringwood, 1982
- Lindsay, P I'd Live the Same Life Over
Hutchinson & Co, London, 1941
- Lindsay, R A Letter From Sydney
Jester Press, Sydney, 1983
- Marx, J Australian Tragic: Gripping Tales from the Dark Side of Our History
Hachette, Sydney, 2009
- Massingberd, H (ed.) The Daily Telegraph Book of Obituaries: A celebration of eccentric lives
Pan Books, London, 1995
- Moore, T Dancing with Empty Pockets: Australia's Bohemians
Pier 9, Miller's Point, 2012
- Neville, R Hippie Hippie Shake: The Dreams, The Trips, The Trials, The Love-Ins, The Screw Ups, The Sixties
Bloomsbury, London, 1995
- Pearl, C Wild Men of Sydney
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1977
- Slessor, K
(with Croft, J) Backless Betty from Bondi
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1983
(with Reilly, V) Darlinghurst Nights
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1981
- Bread and Wine: Selected Prose
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1970
- Stewart, D A Man of Sydney: An Appreciation of Kenneth Slessor
Thomas Nelson, West Melbourne, 1977
Norman Lindsay: A Personal Memoir
Allen & Unwin House of Books, Crow's Nest, 2012
- Tennant, K Ride on Stranger
Macmillan, New York, 1943

Politics: Australia

- Cunneen, C William John McKell: Boilermaker, Premier, Governor-General
UNSW Press, Kensington, 2000
- Barwick, G A Radical Tory: Garfield Barwick's Reflections and Recollections
Federation Press, Sydney, 1995
- Gentill, S A Few Right Thinking Men: A Rowly Sinclair Mystery
Pantera Press, Sydney, 2010
A Decline in Prophets: A Rowly Sinclair Mystery
Pantera Press, Sydney, 2011
- Hocking, J Gough Whitlam: A Moment in History: The Biography
The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2008
- Lawrence, D H Kangaroo
Martin Secker, London, 1923
- Marr, D Barwick
Allen & Unwin, Crow's Nest, 1980

Crime: Australia, USA and UK

- Allen, G Gullible's Travails
Self-published, Randwick, 1999
- Anonymous True Life Stories of Crooks, Con Men & Courtesans
Universal Books, Sydney, 1973
- Baudin, R Fake: The Passing Fortunes of a Counterfeiter
Eyre Methuen, Sydney, 1977
- Blarney, G Criminal Queens: Powerful Women as the Playthings of Love
Calliope Books, Blacktown, 1982
- Blythe, H Madeleine Smith: A famous Victorian murder trial
Duckworth, London, 1975
- Bottom, B Connections
Sun Macmillan, Sydney, 198
Connections II
Sun Macmillan, Sydney, 1987
Without Fear or Favour
Sun Macmillan, Sydney, 1984
- Campbell, N Femme Fatale: The Female Criminal
Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney, 2009
'Interview with Sunil Badami,' 20 March 2008
- Caterson, S 'The myth in the iron mask'
The Age, 12 November 2005, p 15
[<http://bit.ly/19dkCZF>: accessed 17 June 2008]
- Corris, P Mad Dog: William Cyril Moxley and the Moorebank Killings
NewSouth Publishing, UNSW Press, Kensington, 2011
- Dasey, P The Australian Murder Almanac: 150 Years of Chilling Crime
Nationwide News, Canberra, 1993
- Doyle, P & Williams, C City of Shadows: Sydney Police Photographs 1912 – 1948
Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney, 2005
- Doyle, P Crooks Like Us
Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney 2009
- Doyle, P 'Public eye, private eye: Sydney police mug shots 1912–1930'
SCAN: Journal of media arts culture, Macquarie University
[<http://bit.ly/ppQJ6G> : accessed 15 May 2010]

- Duncombe, S & Mattson, A The Bobbed Hair Bandit: A True Story of Crime and Celebrity in 1920s New York
New York University Press, New York, 2006
- Freeman, G George Freeman: An Autobiography
[self published], Miranda, 1988
- Friedrich, J (with Flanagan, R) Codename: Iago
William Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1991
- Gibson, R The Summer Exercises
University of Western Australia Press / Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Perth / Sydney, 2005
- Girling-Butcher, T Sin City: Crime and Corruption in 20th-Century Sydney
Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney, 2010
- Haldane, R *In the Shadow of Ned Kelly: The Study of Australian Police History*
The Australian Police Journal, Vol. 54, No. 4, December 2000
- Hickie, D Chow Hayes: Gunman
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1990
- Hogan, A On the Game, On the Take: A Brief History of Prostitution in South Sydney
Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, 2001
- Jenkings, W (with Lipson, N & Barnao, T) As Crime Goes By: The Life and Times of "Bondi" Bill Jenkins
Ironbark Press, Sydney, 1992
- Levine, G & McElhinney *'Blue Murder: A RE-IMAGINED History'*
SCAN Journal of media arts culture: "The Glittering Tart:" Imaging Sydney
Media Department, Macquarie University, Ryde,
http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=52
[accessed 21 May 2013]
- Lindskoog, K A & Wynne, P Fakes, Frauds and Other Malarkey: 301 Amazing Stories and How Not To Get Fooled
HarperCollins, Canada, 1993
- Kaplan, R 'The last Peruvian: the Jewish criminal links to Abraham Gilbert Saffron'
Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal, Vol. 19, Pt. 1, 2008, pp 86-97
[<http://bit.ly/12lgzrv> ; <http://bit.ly/12lhmZx>]
- Kelly, V Rugged Angel: The Amazing Career of Policewoman Lillian Armfield
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1961
The Bogeyman: The Exploits of Sergeant C J Chuck, Australia's Most Unpopular Cop
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1956
The Shadow: The Amazing Exploits of Frank Fahy
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1954
- Kerr, J Bent Cops
Wilkinson Publishing, Melbourne, 2009
- Klein, A (ed.) The Double Dealers: Adventures in Deception
J B Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1958
- Kwitny, J The Crimes of the Patriots: a true tale of dope, dirty money and the CIA
Simon & Schuster, New York, 1988
- Leach, C On Top of the Underworld: The Personal Reminiscences of Detective-Inspector Charles E. Leach
Sampson, Low, Marston & Co, London, 1933
- Mann, T Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man
Penguin, London, 1958

- Marx, J Australian Tragic: Gripping Tales from the Dark Side of Our History
Hachette, Sydney, 2009
- McCoy, A W Drug Traffic: Narcotics and Organised Crime in Australia
Harper & Row, Sydney, 1980
- McManus, J Cowboys Full: The Story of Poker
Picador, New York, 2009
- Monaghan, D,
Haddrick, G,
Horsburgh, J *et. al.* Underbelly: Razor
Screentime Pty Ltd, Crows Nest, 2011
- Morton, J &
Lobez, S Dangerous to Know
Victory Books, Carlton, 2009
- Gangland Australia
Victory Books, Carlton, 2007
- Kings of Stings: The Greatest Swindles from Down Under
Victory Books, Carlton, 2011
- Nelson, C Crooked
Random House, Sydney, 2008
- Norman, F Bang to Rights
Hogarth Press, London, 1987
- Reeves, T Mr Sin: The Abe Saffron Dossier
Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2007
- Mr Big: The True Story of Lennie McPherson and His Life of Crime
Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2005
- Saffron, A Gentle Satan: My Father, Abe Saffron
Michael Joseph / Penguin, Ringwood, 2008
- Sagal, P The Book of Vice: Very Naughty Things (And How to Do Them)
HarperEntertainment, New York, 2007
- Segrave, K Women Swindlers in America 1860-1920
McFarland Publishing, Jefferson NC, 2007
- Stone, L Jonah
Text Classics, Melbourne, 2013
- Stradling, J Good Girls Don't Make History
Pier 9, Sydney, 2011
- Bad Girls and Wicked Women: The Most Powerful, Shocking,
Amazing, Thrilling and Dangerous Women of All Time
Pier 9, Sydney, 2011
- Taylor, P Rip Off! Australian fraud, deception and dirty tricks
Five Mile Press, Melbourne, 2011
- Tennant, K The Joyful Condemned
St Martins Press, New York, 1953
- Weill, "Yellow Kid"
(as told to Brannon, W T) "Yellow Kid" Weill: The Autobiography of America's Master Swindler
Ziff-Davis, Chicago, 1948
- Wilson, C A Criminal History of Mankind
Mercury Books, London, 2005
- Wilson, D Big Shots
Sun Macmillan, Sydney, 1986
- (with Robinson, P) Big Shots II
Sun Macmillan, Sydney, 1987

Gambling

- Ashforth, D Ringers & Rascals: The True Story of Racing's Greatest Con Artists
Blood-Horse Publications, Lexington KY, 2004
- Cook, K Titanic Thompson: The Man Who Bet on Anything

- Picador, London, 2010
- Erdnase, W S The Expert at the Card Table
Dover Books, Mineola NY, 1995
- Hickie, D Gentlemen of the Turf: Their Bets, Their Bankrolls, Their Bankruptcies
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1986
- The Prince and the Premier
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1985
- Perkins, K The Gambling Man
Polynesian Press, Sydney, 1990
- Sachar, L The Cardturner: A Novel About a King, a Queen and a Joker
Bloomsbury, New York, 2010
- Wright, L Cards, Dice and Pennies: The Inside Story of Kings Cross Gambling
Horwitz, London, 1967

Entertainment: Film, Radio, Music, Vaudeville & Burlesque

- Allen, R C Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and the American Culture
The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill NC, 1991
- Anderson, G Tivoli King: The Life of Harry Rickards, Vaudeville Showman
Allambie Press, Kensington, 2010
- Angell, B The Coral Browne Story: Theatrical Life and Times of a Lustrous Australian
Angell Productions, Brooklyn NSW, 2007
- Wilton, M Gleanings from "On and Off the Stage"
(as Mrs Bancroft) George Routledge & Sons, London, 1892
- Brodsky, I Sydney Takes the Stage!
Old Sydney Free Press, Sydney, 1963
- Carlotta He Did It Her Way: Carlotta, Legend of Les Girls
(with Cockington, J) Ironbark Press, Chippendale, 1993
- Carlotta: I'm Not That Sort of Girl
(with MacSween, P) Pan MacMillan, Sydney, 2003
- Collins, R Coral Browne: This Effing Lady
Oberon Books, London, 2007
- Coupe, S The Promoters: Inside Stories from the Australian Rock Industry
Hachette, London, 2012
- Dungan, E R with A Guide to Adventure: An Autobiography
Smik, B Dorrance Publishing, Pittsburgh, 2001
- Fernandes, N Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age
Roli Books, New Delhi, 2012
- Grundy, R Reg Grundy
Pier 9 / Murdoch Books, Millers Point, 2010
- Harte, B When Radio Was the Cat's Whiskers
Rosenberg Publishing, Dural, 2002
- Humphreys, A Wonderful
Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2004
- Humphries, B Handling Edna: The Unauthorised Biography
Hachette, Sydney 2009
- Ingrassia, C Anti-Pamela and Shamela
Broadview Press, 29 January 2004
- Kent, J Out of the Bakelite Box: The Heyday of Australian Radio
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1983
- Kramer, E Walkabout Dancer
Trafford Publications, Bloomington, IN, 2008 [self-published]
- Leigh Scott, K Lobby Cards: The Classic Films (from the Michael Hawks Collection)

- Locke Elliott, S Bloomsbury, London, 1988
Fairyland
HarperCollins, New York, 1990
Radio Days
Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993
Water Under the Bridge
Sun Books, Melbourne, 1977
- McLean, A L (ed) Glamour in a Golden Age: Movie Stars of the 1930s
Rutgers University Press, Piscataway, NJ, 2010
- McSween, P Carlotta: I'm Not That Kind of Girl
Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2003
- Morgan, A Hunt Angels
NSW Film Finance Corporation & Palace Films, Sydney, 2006
Representations of Crime in Australian Cinema: A Critical
Evaluation of the Films of Rupert Kathner 1934–1951
MA Thesis, Department of Media, Macquarie University,
2005
- Morgan, A 'Retelling History in the Digital Age: The Scripting of Hunt Angels'
SCAN Journal of media arts culture: "The Glittering Tart:"
Imaging Sydney
Media Department, Macquarie University, Ryde,
http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=79
[accessed 21 May 2013]
- Reade, E Australian Silent Films: A Pictorial History, 1896-1929
- Sharman, J Blood & Tinsel: A Memoir
The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2008
- Skidmore, I Forgive Us Our Press Passes
Revel Barker Publishing, London, 2008
- van Straten, F Tivoli!
Lothian, South Melbourne, 2003
- Wenner, D Fearless Nadia: The true story of Bollywood's original stunt queen
Penguin, New Delhi, 2005

Entertainment: Magic, Circuses & Travelling Shows

- Barnett, D 'Darkness in literature: Ray Bradbury's Something Wicked This
Way Comes'
The Guardian Books Blog, 14 December 2012
[<http://bit.ly/14oUWrA>: accessed 16 December 2012]
- Bogdan, R Freak Show: Representing Human Oddities for Amusement and
Profit
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988
- Bone, H Side Show: My Life with Geeks, Freaks & Vagabonds in the Carny
Trade
(with Waldren, D)
Sun Dog Press, Northville, 2001
- Bradbury, R Something Wicked This Way Comes
Spectra, New York, 1983
- Broome, R &
Jackamos, A
Broome, R Sideshow Alley
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 1994
- Broome, R 'Not Strictly Business: Freaks and the Australian Showground World'
Australian Historical Studies, Vol. 40, No. 3
University of Melbourne, Carlton, 2009
Routledge,
- Cipolla, M The Magic of Belief

- Corinda, T Cagliari Press, Munich, 1969
13 Steps to Mentalism
Tannen Magic Publishing, New York, 1968
- Dunn, K Geek Love
Abacus, London, 1989
- Dunninger, J Dunninger's Complete Encyclopaedia of Magic
Hamlyn, London, 1970
- Fenner, M Sandison & Fenner, W The Circus: Lure and Legend
Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1970
- Findlater, R Grimaldi, King of the Clowns
Macgibbon & Kee, London, 1955
- FitzSimons, R Death & The Magician: The Mystery of Houdini
Hamish Hamilton, London, 1980
- Gopnik, A 'The Real Work: Modern Magic and the Meaning of Life'
The New Yorker, 17 March 2008
[<http://nyr.kr/1431JnO>: accessed 20 March 2008]
- Gould, G D Carter Beats the Devil
Sceptre, London, 2002
- Greaves, G The Circus Comes to Town: Nostalgia of the Australian Big Tops
Reed, Terrey Hills, 1980
- Hay, H Cyclopaedia of Magic
David McKay Company, Philadelphia, 1949
- Hornberger, F Carny Folk: The World's Weirdest Sideshow Acts
Citadel Press, New York 2005
- Irving, J Son of the Circus
Random House, New York, 1994
- Jando, D The Circus Book: 1870-1950
(Daniel, N ed.) Taschen, Los Angeles, 2010
- Kirk, R Circus Heroes and Heroines
N J Hammond, Maplewood, 1972
- Knaebel, N Step Right Up! Stories of Carnivals, Sideshows and The Circus
Carroll & Graff, New York, 2006
- Lévi, E The History of Magic
(trans. A E White) Ryder & Co, London, 1982
- Lord, F A Little Big Top
Rigby, Adelaide, 1965
- Morgan, B The Showies: Revelations of Australia's Outdoor Showmen
(self published), Mitcham, 1995
- Mark, M E Indian Circus
Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1993
- Neville, G Incidents in the Life of Joseph Grimaldi
Cape, London, 1980
- Nickell, J Secrets of the Sideshows
University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 2005
- Park, R Swords and Crowns and Rings
Penguin, Ringwood, 1977
- Parker, M The World's Most Fantastic Freaks
Hamlyn, London, 1994
- Pritchard, K S Haxby's Circus
HarperCollins Australia, Sydney, 1995
- Ramsland, J Children of the Circus: The Australian Experience
(with St Leon, M) Butterfly Books, Springwood, 1993
- Rauscher, W V John Calvert: Magic and Adventures Around the World
Claitor's Publishing Division, Baton Rouge, 1987
- Robbins, T The Unholy Three
Idea Men Productions Editions, West Orange, 2005

- Rose, J Snake Oil: Life's Calculations, Misdirections and Manipulations
Bartleby Press, Laurel, 2007
- Schneider, H The Last Sideshow
Dazed Books, London, 2004
- Sharman, J Blood & Tinsel: A Memoir
The Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2008
- Snow, D Circus Boy! Under the Big Top
Whitman Publishing Company, Racine, 1957
- Sorcar, P C Sorcar on Magic: Reminsces and Selected Tricks
Indrajal Publications, Calcutta, 1960
- St Leon, M Australian Circus Reminisces
[self-published], Ultimo, 1984
Australian Circus Sources
[self-published] Ultimo, 1986
Circus: The Australian Story
Melbourne Books, Melbourne, 2011
Spangles and Sawdust: The Circus in Australia
Greenhouse Publications, Richmond, 1983
The Circus in Australia 1842-1921
[self-published], Wahroonga, 1981
The Wizard of the Wire: The Story of Col Colleano
Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1993
- Stencell, A W Girl Show: Into the Canvas World of Bump and Grind
Pluto Press, Annandale, 1999
- Steinmeyer, J Magic, 1400s-1950
Taschen, Los Angeles, 2009
- Caveney, M et al.
Steinmeyer, J
Chung The Glorious Deception: The Double Life of William Robinson, aka
Ling Soo the "Marvellous Chinese Conjurer"
Carroll & Graf, New York, 2005
- Thompson, C &
Gamble, K
Toole-Scott, R The Last Circus
Hodder, Sydney, 1997
Circus and Allied Arts: A World Bibliography, based mainly on circus
literature in the British Museum, Library of Congress, Bibliothèque
Nationale and his own collection
Harpur & Sons / Circus Friends' Association, London, 1992
- Wirth, G Round the world with a circus: memories of trials, triumphs and
tribulations
Troedel & Cooper, Melbourne, 1925

History, Society & Culture: India

- Abdullah, M &
Mathew, R
Amin, M J The Time of the Peacock
Pacific Books, Sydney, 1965
- Amin, M J Dancing to the Flute
Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2012
- Anand, M R Untouchable
Penguin, New Delhi, 2006
- Anderson, E Little Ghosts
Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1959
- Anderson, K
Jungle The Black Panther of Sivanipalli and Other Adventures of the Indian
Jungle
George Allen and Unwin, London, 1959
Nine Maneaters and One Rogue
George Allen and Unwin, London, 1954

- Beaton, C An Indian Album
B T Batsford, London, 1945
- Berry, J Krishna Fluting
Macmillan, New York, 1959
- Bond, R Strange Men, Strange Places: True Stories from India of Soldiers, Saints and Sinners
Pearl Publications, Bombay, 1969
- Boo, K Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity
Scribe, Melbourne, 2012
- Briggs, G W The Chamars (from The Religious Life of India series, eds. Farquhar J N and Macnicol, N)
Association Press, Calcutta, 1920
- Bromfield, L Night in Bombay
Malabar Press Edition, New York, 1940
The Rains Came: A Novel of Modern India
Harper & Brothers, New York, 1937
- Cameron, J An Indian Summer: A Personal Experience of India
Penguin, London, 1987
- Chandra, V Red Earth and Pouring Rain
Faber & Faber, London, 1994
- Clune, F Song of India
Invincible Press, Sydney, 1946
- Corbett, J Man-eaters of Kumaon
Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1944
The Temple Tiger and More Man-eaters of Kumaon
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1954
The Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag
Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1947
My India
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1952
- Dalrymple, W Begums, Thugs and White Mughals: The Journals of Fanny Parks
Sickle Moon Books, London, 2002
- de Lepervanche, M M Studies in Society: Indians in a White Australia
George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984
- de Souza, E Purdah: An Anthology
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004
- Deamer, D The Suttee of Safa
G W Dillingham, London, 1913
- Desai, M The Rediscovery of India
Allen Lane, New Delhi, 2009
- Ebenezer, A Eton of the East: The Story of Bishop Cotton Boys' School
Wordmakers Publications, Bangalore, 1998
- Farwell, B Queen Victoria's Little Wars
Harper and Row, New York, 1971
- Fallon, S W (eds.) A Dictionary of Hindustani Proverbs: including many Marwari, Panjabi, Carnac Temple, R
Chand, F Maggah, Bhojpuri, and Tirhuti proverbs, saying, emblems, aphorisms, maxims and similes
Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1998
- Felton, M A Child Widow's Story
Katha, Delhi, 2003
- Fernandes, N Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age
Roli Books, New Delhi, 2012
- Fisher, M H Counterflows to Colonialism
Permanent Black, Delhi, 2004
- Forbes, G Women in Modern India

- The New Cambridge History of India Series
Cambridge University Press / Foundation Books, New Delhi, 1999
- Forster, E M Indian journals and essays
Heinemann India, New Delhi, 1983
- Godden, R Black Narcissus
Pan Books, London, 1994
- Harband, B M Under the Shadow of Durgamma
The Religious Tract Society and Sunday School Union of Victoria,
Melbourne, 1901
- Holderness, T W Peoples and Problems of India (from the Home University Library of
Modern Knowledge)
Williams & Norgate, London, 1912
- Holroyd, P &
Westrip, J Colonial Cousins
Wakefield Press, Kent Town SA, 2010
- Hyder, Q River of Fire
Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1999
- Jayawardena, K Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World
Zed Books, London, 1994 (c 1986)
The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia
During British Rule
Routledge, New York, 1995
- Jensen, H A Classified Collection of Tamil Proverbs
Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 2002
- Joshi, A The Apprentice
Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1974
- Kakar, S Mira and The Mahatma
Viking-Penguin, New Delhi, 2004
- Kendall, F White Cargo
Penguin, London, 1998
- Kipling, R Kim (Norton Critical Edition, ed. Z T Sullivan)
W W Norton, London, 2002
Plain Tales From the Hills
Oxford University Press, 1988
- Krishna, N Sacred Animals of India
Penguin, New Delhi, 2010
- Krishnan, M Jungle and Backyard
Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993
- LaPierre, D The City of Joy
Century, London, 1986
- Maugham, W S The Razor's Edge
Heinemann, London, 1948
- Murari, T Field of Honour
Methuen, London, 1981
- Myer, L H The Root and the Flower
New York Review Books Classics, New York, 2001
- Nair, M Salaam Bombay!
Mirabai Productions/Connoisseur Video, 1984
- Narayan, R K The Guide
Penguin Classics, London, 1988
The Dark Room
Vintage Classics, London, 2001
- Panter-Downes, M Ooty Preserved: A Victorian Hill Station in India
Hamish Hamilton, London, 1967
- Prakash, G Mumbai Fables
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010
- Rao, R The Serpent and the Rope

- Orient Paperbacks / John Murray, New Delhi / London, 1968
- Sankar Chowringhee
Penguin India, New Delhi, 2012
- Steel, F A & Menpes, M
Stuart, C
INDIA (from Black's Popular Series of Colour Books)
A & C Black, London, 1905
A Vindication of the Hindoos *Both males and females, in answer to the attacks made upon both by the Reverend....*
Black, Parry, Kingsbury and John Rodwell, London, 1808
- Swarup, V
Q&A
Black Swan, London, 2006
- Tammita-Delgoda, S
A Traveller's History of India (Third Edition)
Cassell & Co, London, 2002
- Teo, H-M
'Romancing the Raj: Interracial Relations in Anglo-Indian Romance Novels'
History of Intellectual Culture, Vol. 4, No. 1
University of Calgary, Calgary, 2004
[<http://bit.ly/YYL5Ey>: accessed 27 January 2013]
- White, R
Men and Angels
Pan, London, 1964
- Wilson, I
Indian Excursion
The Travel Bookshop, London, 1964
- Yule, H and Burnell, AC
Hobson-Jobson: The Anglo-Indian Dictionary
Wordsworth Imprints, London, 1996

History, Society & Culture: Bangalore

- Byron Norris, P
Follow My Bangalorey Man
British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, London, 1996
- Colaco, P
Peter Colaco's Bangalore
Via Media Books, Bangalore, 2003
- De, A
Multiple City: Writings on Bangalore
Penguin, New Delhi, 2008
- Issar, T P (ed.)
The City Beautiful: A celebration of the architectural heritage and city-aesthetics of Bangalore
Bangalore Urban Art Commission, Bangalore, 1988
- Majumdar, R K & Srivasta, A N
History of Karnataka
S B D Publishers' Distributors, Delhi, 1995
- Nair, J
The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005
- Pott, J
Old Bungalows in Bangalore
(self published), London, 1977
- Srinivasan, P (ed.)
A Road Guide to Bangalore (from TTK Discover India Series)
TTK Pharma Ltd – Printing Division, Chennai, 1999

Crime: India

- Edwardes, S M
Crime in British India : a brief review of the more important offences included in the Annual criminal returns with chapters on prostitution & miscellaneous matters
Oxford University Press, London, 1924

History, Society & Culture: Anglo-Indians, Princely States and the Raj

- Allen, C Plain Tales of the Raj
Warner, London, 1981
RAJ: A Scrapbook of British India 1877-1947
André Deutsch, London, 1977
The Buddha and the Sahibs
John Murray, London, 2002
- Anonymous
(Black, D) Letters of an Indian Judge to an English Gentlewoman
Peter Davies, London, 1945
Bance, P The Duleep Singhs: The Photograph Album of Queen Victoria's
Maharajah
Sutton Publishing, London, 2004
- Blackford, S One Hell of a Life: An Anglo-Indian Wallah's Memoir from the Last
Decades of the Raj
Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2005
Self-published, Fulham Gardens SA, 2000
- Blunt, A Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of
Home
- Brendon, V Children of the Raj
Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 2005
- Bond, R Room on the Roof
Penguin India, New Delhi, 1987
- Burton, A At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in
Late-Victorian Britain
Munshilal Manoharlal, University of California Press, 1998
- Dass, D J Maharaja: The Love Lives and Intrigues of the Maharajas of India
Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi, 2008
Maharani: A Fabulous Collection of Adventures of Indian
Princesses and Royal Mistresses
Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi, 2008
- Devi, G &
Rama Rau, S
de Courcy, A A Princess Remembers: The Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur
Century, London, 1984
Fishing Fleet: Husband-hunting in the Raj
Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 2012
- Diver, M Far to Seek: A Romance of England and India
William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, 1925
The Great Amulet
William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, 1925
The Unsung: A Record of British Services in India
William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, 1945
- Farrell, J. G. The Siege of Krishnapur
Wiedenfield and Nicholson, London, 1973
- Fisher, M H The Inordinately Strange Life of Dyce Sombre: Victorian Anglo-Indian
MP and Chancery 'Lunatic'
University of Columbia Press, 2010
- Forster, E M The Hill of Devi
Penguin, London, 1965
- Godden, R The River
Mayflower Dell, London, 1966
- with Godden, J Two Under the Indian Sun
Beech Tree Books, London, 1987
- Hathaway, H [dir] The Lives of the Bengal Lancer
Universal Studios, Los Angeles, 1935
- Hudson, R (ed.) The Raj: An Eye-witness History of the British in India

- The Folio Society, London, 1999
 Ismail, M My Public Life: Recollections and Reflections
 George Allen and Unwin, London, 1954
- Kunzru, H The Impressionist
 Faber & Faber, London, 2001
- Kurosawa, S Coronation Talkies
 Viking, Camberwell, 2004
- Lahiri, S Indian in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930
 Frank Cass, London & Portland OR, 2000
- MacDonald Fraser, G The Flashman Papers
 Anchor, London, 1969–2005
- McPhedran, C White Butterflies
- Llewellyn-Jones, R (ed) *Chowkidar – The Journal of the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA)*
 BACSA, London, 1977—present
 Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2002
- Martyn, M Married to the Raj
 BACSA, London, 1992
- Masani, Z Indian Tales of the Raj
 University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1987
- Moore, G J The Lotus and the Rose: An Anglo-Indian Story
 River Seine Publications, Melbourne, 1986
- National Maritime Museum, London
 ‘Unpacking the Trunk: the cruise wardrobe in the 1920s and ‘30s’
 National Maritime Museum, London, 2006-7
- Nehra, A Letters of an Indian Judge to an English Gentlewoman
 Lovat Dickson, London, 1934
- Richards, F Old-Soldier Sahib
 Faber & Faber, London, 1965
- Scott, P The Jewel in the Crown
 Heinemann, London, 1966
Staying On
 Heinemann, London, 1977
- Scott, W The Surgeon’s Daughter (from *The Canongate Chronicles*): Penn State Electronic Classics Series
 Penn State University Press, University Park, PA, 2010
 [http://bit.ly/AbL3Cq : accessed 08 Mar 2012]
- Shreeve, N Dark Legacy: The Fortunes of Begam Samru
 Rupa Press, New Delhi, 1998
- Slaughter, C A Black Englishman
 Faber & Faber, London, 2004
 Virago Press, London, 1977
- Steel F A & G Gardiner The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook
 Heinemann, London, 1909
- Stracey, E Growing up in Anglo-India
 EastWest Books, Chennai, 2000
- Thorpe, O Paper Boats in the Monsoon: Life in the Lost World of Anglo-India
 Trafford, Victoria BC, 2007
The Lion and the Chakra
 Trafford, Victoria BC, 2009
- Trevelyan, H The India We Left
 Macmillan, London, 1972
Public and Private
 Macmillan, London, 1980
- Trevelyan, R The Golden Oriole: childhood, family and friends in India

- Martin Secker & Warburg, London, 1987
- Vernede, R V (ed.) British Life in India: An Anthology of Humorous and Other Writings Perpetrated by the British in India, 1750-1950, With Some Latitude for Works Completed After Independence
Oxford University Press India, New Delhi, 1995
- Visram, A Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947
Pluto Press, London, 1986
- Wainwright, A M “The Better Class” of Indians: Social Rank, Imperial Identity and South Asians in Britain 1858-1914
Manchester University Press, London & New York, 2008
- Williams, B R Anglo-Indians: Vanishing Remains of a Bygone Era
Calcutta Tiljallah Relief, New Jersey, 2002
- Whittington-Egan, M Khaki Mischief: The Agra Murder Case
Souvenir Press, London, 1990
- Wyvern, Colonel Notes from Madras (from Culinary Jottings from Madras, 1878)
Great Food Series, Penguin Books, London, 2011
- Yeats-Brown, F Bengal Lancer
The Camelot Press, London, 1930
- Younger, C Anglo-Indians: Neglected Children of the Raj
BR Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1987
- Wicked Women of the Raj
Harper Collins India, New Delhi, 2003
- Younger, C & Duyker, E Molly and the Rajah
Australian Mauritian Press, Sylvania, 1991
- Zubrycki, J The Last Nizam: An Indian Prince in the Australian Outback
Macmillan, Sydney, 2006

History, Society & Culture: Indian Independence

- Dubb, E
Smedley, A Daughter of Earth
- Shet, S
Skeptic Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: A Man of Destiny of India (from the Book Club Series)
B Premanand, Podanur, 1999

Cults, Occult & Religion

- Besant, A India (Essays and Addresses, Vol. IV)
Theosophical Publishing Society, London & Madras, 1913
- An Autobiography
Penguin, New Delhi, 2005
- Jones, R Julia Paradise
Text Classics, Melbourne, 2013
- Leavitt, J Esoteric Symbols: The Tarot in Yeats, Eliot and Kafka
University Press of America, Lanham MD, 2007
- Mahadevan, T M Ramana Maharshi: The Sage of Arunacala
Mandala Books, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1977
- Mascaró, J (trans.) The Upanishads
Penguin Classics, London, 1965
- Rieu, E V (ed.) Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia
UNSW Press, Kensington, 1986

- Rolland, R The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel
Advaita Ashrama Publication Department, Calcutta, 1992
- Samways, L Dangerous Persuaders: An exposé of gurus, personal development, courses & cults, and how they operate
Penguin, Ringwood, 1994
- Spence, L The Encyclopaedia of Occultism & Parapsychology Part 2
Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, 2003
- Sri Aurobindo Ashram Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram (9th Edition)
Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 2001
- “Wilfreid” The Mother: A Short Biography
Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, 1986
- Williams, C V Jiddu Krishnamurti, World Philosopher (1895-1985): His Life and Thoughts
Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 2004
- Yogananda, P Autobiography of a Yogi
The Philosophical Library, New York, 1946
Wine of the Mystic: The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam: A Spiritual Interpretation
Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles, 1994

Sex, Gender & Transgender

- Bongiorno, F The Sex Lives of Australians: A History
Black Inc, Melbourne, 2012
- Cousins, S To Beg I Am Ashamed: The autobiography of a London prostitute
Obelisk Press, Paris, 1938
- Curll, E & Gildon, C Charting a Course for Merryland: Enlightenment Pornography
Mercury Publications, Gillingham, 1975
- Deshpande, R Main Hijra Hoon: My Name is Sunita
TVI/Business India Television, New Delhi, 1997
- “Devereaux, Capt C” Venus in India: Or Love Adventures in Hindustan
Privately Printed, London, 1918
- Ghosh, D Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire (from Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society)
Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006
- Greene, R The Art of Seduction (A Joost Elffers Book)
Penguin Books, New York, NY, 2001
- Hamilton, M Our Girls: Aussie Pinups of the 40s and 50s
Arcade Publications, Melbourne,
- Jaffrey, Z The Invisibles: A Tale of the Eunuchs of India
Weidenfield and Nicholson, London, 1997
- Love, B The Encyclopaedia of Unusual Sex Practices
Barricade Books, Fort Lee NJ, 1984
- Mayo, K Mother India
Jonathon Cape, London, 1927
Slaves of the Gods
Jonathon Cape, London, 1929
- Nanda, S Neither Man Nor Woman: The Hijras of India (Second Edition)
Wadsworth, New York, 1999
- Osho The Book of Woman
Penguin, New Delhi, 2002
- Plowden, A The Case of Eliza Armstrong, ‘A Child of 13 Bought for £5’
British Broadcasting Corporation, London, 1974
- Punekar S D & A study of prostitutes in Bombay : (with reference to family

Conrad, J	Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1943 <u>The Nigger of the Narcissus</u> Doubleday & Company, New York, 1914 (1897) <u>Heart of Darkness (and The Congo Diary)</u> Penguin, London, 2007
Melville, H	<u>Moby-Dick; Or, The White Whale</u> Richard Bentley, London, 1851
‘Shalimar’ (F C Hendry)	<u>Ships and Men</u> William Blackwood and Sons, London, 1946
Shute, N	<u>Round the Bend</u> Pan Books, London, 1968

Newspapers & Other Media

<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	“‘The Harp in the South” — Readers’ Opinions’ 11 January 1947, p 2
<i>Truth</i>	‘Clean Up Razorhurst!’ 23 September 1928, p 5

Internet Resources and Journals

ABC Sydney Sidetracks http://www.abc.net.au/innovation/sidetracks/	http://www.cdlib.org/programs/escholarship.html
American Historical Association http://www.historians.org/	Centre of South Asian Studies: Cambridge South Asian Archive http://www.s-asian.cam.ac.uk/archome.html
The American Historical Review http://www.indiana.edu/~ahrweb/index.html	Creative Nonfiction http://www.creativenonfiction.org/index.html
Australian Dictionary of Biography Online Edition http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm National Centre for Biography The Australian National University, Acton Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1996	The Daily Beast http://www.dailybeast.com
Australian Poetry Library http://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au	Digital South Asia Library http://dsal.uchicago.edu/
Austlit http://www.austlit.edu.au/	Google Books http://books.google.com.au/ (books listed in My Library)
The California Digital Library	Hathi Trust Digital Library http://www.hathitrust.org/projects
	Historical Novel Society http://www.historicalnovelsociety.org The Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.com

India Hello, Bangalore Walla Namaskara!
Bangalore and Anglo-Indians
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/2960/bangalorewalla.html>

The Internet Archive
<http://www.archive.org/>

Letters of Note
<http://www.lettersofnote.com/>

The Online Etymology Dictionary
<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php>

The Paris Review
<http://www.theparisreview.org>

The Probert Dictionary
<http://www.probertencyclopaedia.com/>

The Public Domain Review

<http://publicdomainreview.org>

Questia Online Archive
<https://www.questia.com>

Quote Investigator
<http://quoteinvestigator.com> *Scan: Journal of media arts culture*
<http://scan.net.au/scan/index.php>

The State Library of NSW
<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au>

Swallowing the Camel
<http://swallowingthecamel.wordpress.com/>

Dictionary of Sydney
<http://home.dictionaryofsydney.org/>

Wikipedia
<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

World Cinema Directory
<http://worldcinemadirectory.co.uk>