This is the published version:


Available from Deakin Research Online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30022933

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright: 2009, The Authors
Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is an account of how the West sought to control the Orient by imposing generic characteristics on diverse cultures and peoples. In so doing the West not only claimed the right to define the Orient, a considerable power in itself, but did so in persistently negative terms. It followed that the degraded Orient of Western discourse had to be brought to order by the West. Said’s focus was the Middle East and the representational and territorial conflicts between Christianity and Islam. In the Australian case, the battle between the European and Arab worlds was less of an issue than the conflict between the West and Asia or, in the language of the late nineteenth century, the conflict between “white” and “yellow.” Prior to the current war on terrorism the “yellow peril” gripped the popular imagination in Australia more forcibly than the real and perceived threats from Islam and the Middle East.

By definition Orientalism is at its most accessible and readily communicated in popular culture where many of the abstractions of Orientalist discourse are given human form and immediacy. Among the most recognizable of the evil Oriental figures in the twentieth century is Dr Fu Manchu, the creation of the British popular novelist Sax Rohmer. The Doctor made his first appearance in 1913 in *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu*. It is clear from the outset that the survival of “the entire white race” is at stake. The last of the Fu Manchu titles, *Emperor Fu Manchu* was published in 1959, the year of Sax Rohmer’s death. There were thirteen novels in all and a number of films. The Orientalist dimensions of popular culture are at once transnational, in that a figure like Fu Manchu is recognizable across cultures, and culturally specific in their appeal to particular national and regional expressions of the threatening Orient. The Fu Manchu novels were well known to Australian audiences among whom there was a persistent anxiety about proximity to Asia’s huge populations. Anxieties about the Orient gained momentum from the 1880s and owed a good deal to concerns about overcrowded populations and dreadful diseases, concerns that were intensified by a growing realization that what for the British was the Far East was the Near North to Australian colonists. Rather than being safely remote, Australians discovered that the populous East was disturbingly close.

My purpose in this paper is to explore the characteristics attributed to “Orientalist” creations like Dr Fu Manchu. The movements, the dress, the patterns of speech and the conduct of the leading Oriental figures provide a catalogue of the “otherness” attributed to the Orient. The Orient is inscribed and particularized as a regime of difference through these figures, in the process confirming the unbridgeable divide separating Europe from Asia. The ongoing battle between competing adversaries like Dr Fu Manchu and his opposite number, Sir Denis Nayland Smith, mirror and rehearse the larger conflict between East and West and its accompanying narratives of race war and invasion. Fu Manchu
embodies a “subtle, intangible power” whereas Nayland Smith, “lean, agile, bronzed with the suns of Burma-was symbolic of the clean British efficiency which sought to combat the insidious enemy” (The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu 86). By reversing these categories it can be inferred that the Orient is morally and racially unclean.

Australia’s first sustained invasion novel, serialized in 1888, was titled “White or Yellow: The Race War of AD 1908.” It was a case of one race dominating the other and where races came together the only possible outcome was a war to the finish. An Australian writer put the matter with unmistakable clarity in the 1880s: “The Asiat[... ] must either conquer or be conquered by, must either wipe out or be wiped out by the Aryan and the European” (Adams 1888). Race war was commonly depicted as the motive power of history. Conflict was deemed inevitable. Lane’s racial juxtaposition was repeated in other titles including Carlton Dowe’s Yellow and White (1895) and Fleetwood Chidell’s Australia—White or Yellow? (1926). The first significant legislative act of the Commonwealth Parliament in 1901, the year in which Australia became a nation, was the White Australia Policy. In fact, the formal wording of the act referred to “immigration restriction,” but maintaining a “white Australia” was the clear intention of the vast majority of the parliamentarians who supported the bill. Australia had declared its hand in the race war and indicated its determination to fight for the maintenance of a white, racially homogenous continent.

Where history itself was viewed as a drive for racial supremacy it followed that the Australian continent was a major strategic resource for the white cause. This understanding of Australia’s vital role in the global struggle for racial dominance was given its fullest expression in Charles H. Pearson’s National Life and Character: A Forecast, first published in 1893 to considerable critical acclaim. Pearson was an Oxford educated historian who had moved to the Australian colonies in the 1870s where he soon involved himself in colonial politics. He became a cabinet minister in the Victorian parliament and a prominent educator. Pearson argued that the European races had reached the limit of their territorial expansion, basing his case on the prevailing scientific orthodoxy that precluded permanent white settlement in the tropics. In Pearson’s view, Australia represented the last remaining opportunity for substantial European settlement and racial renewal. According to Pearson’s dramatic reformulation, Australia was not a remote and rather insignificant outpost of Empire, but a continent that would help determine the future of “the higher civilisation.” In effect, Pearson saw Australia as the last white homeland available for extensive European settlement.

Although Pearson died in 1894 his ideas helped confirm the case for a white Australia. National Life and Character was well known to some of the most influential figures in the new Commonwealth parliament. But his book also occupies an intriguing place in the wider history of racial ideas. Kaiser Wilhelm had been reading Pearson’s National Life and Character when he coined the term the “yellow peril.” Wilhelm drew a sketch depicting the nations of Europe symbolized as female figures, including Germany and Britannia, gazing towards threatening storms and dire portents representing the East. The sketch, titled “The Yellow Peril,” was passed to Professor Knatchbull who completed it as a painting in 1895. The fame of this joint enterprise was enhanced when Wilhelm donated the painting to the Tsar. Once coined, the term “yellow peril” was soon known around the world (Walker, 2005: 541–42).

There was considerable dispute over the danger that China posed to the West. Whereas Pearson saw the Chinese as a formidable adversary, Lord Curzon, one of his reviewers and a significant figure in Said’s Orientalist pantheon, dismissed any claim that the Chinese were capable of reinventing themselves as a significant power. He regarded Pearson as a negligible figure from a remote colony who could not possibly know anything about the Orient. In Curzon’s opinion, the Chinese were a “stagnant” race and would remain so. This classically Orientalist position was also spelt out in one of the first accounts of
Kaiser Wilhelm’s “yellow peril” theories in the American press. In January 1898 Harper’s Weekly reproduced the Wilhelm/Knackfuss painting with an accompanying essay by the French painter, J. F. Raffaelli. Raffaelli dismissed the yellow peril threat, arguing that the animating spirit of Eastern civilizations had long since died, leaving only a degenerate remnant of what had gone before. Raffaelli included Chinese, Indian and Egyptian civilizations in his roll call of the “famous dead.” He reasoned that “history” ordained that failed civilizations were incapable of rising again and were doomed to “mere animalism and vegetation.” These civilizations had no coherent purpose and no capacity to plan and direct their future. Raffaelli was clearly on the side of those who saw the yellow peril not as an impending danger, but as a foolish delusion. Even so, there was a considerable battle over whether the Orient could be dismissed as stagnant, changeless and no threat to the West or whether it was alive and a real and serious threat.

Some years later, in the 1920s, the American race theorist, Lothrop Stoddard, popularised another term that achieved considerable currency, “the rising tide of colour” (Stoddard 1921). In maintaining that the European world was in danger of being swamped by the “inferior” races of Asia, Stoddard made his debt to Pearson very clear. He hailed National Life and Character as an “epoch-making book” that exposed the vulnerability of the “higher races” among whom, it goes without saying, Stoddard placed himself. For thirty years Stoddard was one of America’s most prolific and influential exponents of “yellow peril” anxieties and like his colleague, Madison Grant, he lamented the “passing of the great [Nordic] race” (Grant 1916).

 Said’s Orient is passive and acted upon. The Arab world was depicted by the West as a backward and exhausted civilization, eroded by dirt, disease and spiritual decay. Defining itself against the stagnant Orient, the West emerges as dynamic, progressive and innovative. The Orient, according to these juxtapositions, was mired in the past and crippled by superstition, whereas the West represented the future and the path to renewal. The Orient would need to be led and the West would do the leading. However, Australia’s near north, particularly China and Japan could not be so readily dismissed as passive and backward. Indeed, much of the anxiety occasioned by the “yellow peril” derived from the view that ancient civilizations that had long been somnolent had awakened to a new sense of their power. According to this view, the near north, using a thoroughly Orientalist metaphor, displayed the coiled energy and deadly intent of a snake poised to strike. Australia’s proximity to Asia demanded watchfulness and a measure of respect for Asia’s sheer animal power. While the power of the near north might command respect, its methods of combat were commonly regarded as cruel and barbarous. Whereas the West was typically manly and upright and clearly on the side of order and justice, the Eastern adversary was just as typically cruel, cunnings and criminally inclined. According to Nayland Smith:

“No white man, I honestly believe, appreciates the unemotional cruelty of the Chinese. (The Mystery of Fu Manchu 76)

This was a profoundly gendered conflict. The battle between East and West as it is fought out in the pages of popular novelists is also a cultural battle over the nature and meaning of male and female responsibilities in rapidly urbanizing Western societies. An urgent question prompted these reflections: did the trend towards urban comfort and increasing refinement in manners and intellect threaten the survival of the West? Put more bluntly, but in terms that echo late nineteenth century language and sentiment, could effete societies withstand the challenge of more brutal adversaries? Australia provided an intriguing case study of a society that seemed to invite a challenge from Asia. Talk of Australia as an “empty” continent pointed both to its desirability as a place to settle large populations and its relatively undefended condition. Australia also exemplified Western modernity. It was one of the most urbanized societies on earth, marked by progressive social legislation, high standards of living and literacy and increasing opportunities for the education of women. Was this increasingly wealthy society in a position to defend its comfortable lifestyle in the event of a challenge from ruthless and desperate Asia? There
were a number of commentators who feared that in becoming a modern people Australians had lost their stomach for a fight.

From the late 1880s a number of invasion novels were published in which Australia found itself confronted by an Asian adversary. Allowing for differences of content, emphasis and style one of the more persistent themes was the diverse challenge that the threat from Asia posed for Australian masculinity. Put slightly differently, there was a powerful message in these novels that Australia more than most nations needed to retain and value a culture of warrior masculinity. It seemed that the allure of modernity and its softening comforts posed a special threat to Australia and might allow Asian adversaries to invade the continent and enslave the population. While it was understood that no-one could expect to escape such a calamity, the position of Australian women was considered particularly invidious. One of the repeated motifs of Orientalist literature is the inferior status of Eastern women. All conquering Asia, it was argued, would treat Australian women with scant regard subjecting them to every kind of brutality and sexual humiliation. In this manner, warrior masculinity not only served the cause of national survival, it also acted as a chivalrous barrier protecting female honour. There were repeated warnings in this literature against Australia becoming too modern too quickly and in the process diminishing its reserves of masculinity.

Australia provided a vital test of the Asian challenge to European dominance. Its very modernity made it a weak link in the chain. While it is customary to regard the “European gaze” as a discourse of superiority and unassailable confidence in Western values, the Australian case reveals a persistent anxiety about the strength and durability of European settlement in Australia. The effectiveness of white settlement itself seemed in doubt on climatic grounds. Northern Australia, the most exposed and vulnerable of its territories, lay within the tropics and scientific opinion around 1900 was adamant that whites could not create permanent settlements in the tropical regions, a view that persisted, though not without challenge, down to the Second World War.

While the problem of climate was considered real enough it also provided an opportunity to discuss the undiscussably namely, that white Australia might prove to be an experiment that failed. In a contest with Asia, it was not impossible to imagine that Australia might lose and in losing find itself in a position resembling that of Aboriginal Australians. Asia might do to white Australia what it had done to the Aborigines. The idea that white Australians might become just another lost race was not at all far fetched when the Commonwealth of Australia was created in 1901. The telling of world history at the time was often little more than the story of once great races and civilisations that had been “wiped out” by more powerful forces. It was just possible that the contest with Asia might not be the one-sided affair that some claimed would be the case. One of the overt themes of the Australian invasion literature of the period from the late 1880s to the First World War was the need for Australians to realize that their potential Asian adversaries might well give them a run for their money. They might be a bad lot (and their leaders particularly so) but there was every reason to believe that they were also clever, determined and very patient.

The evil genius of the East was summarised in the figures of Dr Nikola, Dr Tsarka and Dr Fu Manchu. Dr Nikola was the creation of Guy Boothby, an expatriate Australian novelist who wrote over fifty novels between 1895 and his death ten years later at the age of thirty-eight. There are seven Nikola novels beginning with A Bid for Fortune (1895) and ending with The Curse of the Snake (1902). Nikola is ambiguously situated between East and West. While his origins are unclear, his status as a criminal mastermind is never in doubt nor is his extensive knowledge of medical science: “All the knowledge of modern science I have acquired. The magic of the East I have explored and tested to the uttermost” (Dr Nikola’s Experiment 40). Oriental magic and western science made a deadly combination. Each of these characters displayed
traits considered central to the avenging Orient, particularly patience and planning. The West may have mastered speed, but the East was thought to have mastered patience. If nothing else it would endure.

Nikola is a gentleman of some refinement in his outward appearance. He is never short of money and travels extensively. His dress is immaculate and formal. Top hats, tails and bow ties are standard with him. While he is undoubtedly a member of what Pearson referred to as the “lower civilisation,” Nikola moves freely in the world of English gentlemen. The boundaries around the “higher civilisation” that Pearson had so wanted to maintain had been breached by the mysterious Doctor. Nikola’s manners were consistent with his gentlemanly appearance. He is a man of elaborate courtesies, a little too elaborate, for it is understood that in the East exquisite refinement and silky manners often concealed terrible cruelty and sadism. Nikola also displays remarkable self-control. An exceptionally attentive and skilled observer might detect in the great doctor a flicker of surprise or a momentary show of emotion, but such breaches are rare and soon concealed. No one has any reason to underestimate Nikola’s powers, but for those who did the disturbing intensity of his mesmeric gaze put the matter beyond all doubt. “Never before had I seen such eyes, they seemed to look me through and through, and to read my innermost thoughts” (Dr Nikola’s Experiment 30). Nikola’s unwavering gaze was made all the more sinister by the constant presence of his silent companion, a black cat perched on his shoulder, with a stare as intense as Nikola’s own.

Nikola’s special talent was medical experimentation, though the purposes of his medical chicanery often remain unclear. He is well on the way to solving the problem of human mortality and is about to unleash a man capable of living for a thousand years. Elsewhere we find the doctor dissecting an “animal strangely resembling a monkey,” watched by the “fiendish black cat” and an albino dwarf (A Bid for Fortune 157). Nikola’s private laboratory is generously decorated with instruments of torture and skeletal. Incense curls from a large brazier. At regular intervals around the walls are “more than a dozen enormous bottles, each of which contained […] human specimens pickled in some light-colored fluid resembling spirits of wine” (A Bid for Fortune 155). While this is an evil place full of sinister portent, Nikola is largely involved in self-aggrandisement and his crimes are primarily motivated by personal greed. He is not engaged upon a racial mission.

Albert Dorrington’s Dr Tsarka is another matter. Dorrington was an expatriate Australian writer in the Boothby mould. The Radium Terrors, in which Dr Tsarka plays a leading role, was published in 1910, three years before Fu Manchu’s first appearance. The Doctor is a Japanese “nerve specialist” working in London, thereby combining the contemporary interest in things Japanese with the Edwardian concern about the growth of nervous disorders, attributed to the increasing pace of urban living and the accelerating demand for “brain workers.” Neurasthenia, or nervous exhaustion, was considered one of the characteristic disorders of advanced Western societies and was taken as a sign of racial decline and a symptom of advanced modernity. America’s Theodore Roosevelt, President from 1901-1908, had suffered from neurasthenia as a young man, but his dedication to the strenuous life had restored him to full manly vigour. Unless the West followed his example, Roosevelt feared that the European nations might succumb to “race suicide.” A decline in the European birth rate, in which Australia shared, seemed to confirm these fears. And the nation that was considered most likely to take advantage of Australia’s weakness was Japan. Dorrington was working a rich seam of cultural anxieties to which he added a fascination with the possibilities of medical science. Madame Curie had discovered radium in 1898 and its rarity, curative properties, luminescence and radioactivity added considerably to its mysterious powers. If the radium found its way into the wrong hands terrible things might occur.

The Radium Terrors begins with the audacious theft of some immensely expensive pure radium. It transpires that Dr Tsarka committed the crime. Like Dr Nikola, Tsarka works at the cutting edge of modern medical science. London had been abuzz with talk of his cleverness and all the best journals
published extensive excerpts from his brilliant pamphlet on the “Generative Sources of Radium” (The Radium Terrors 92). He is a great mind driven and warped by Eastern resentments. This dreadful combination addressed one of the persistent fears in Orientalist popular culture namely, that Europe had taught the secrets of its power to people who were bent on destroying the West. In his various guises, the Europeanised “Asiatic” was thought to pose a terrible danger to the European world. So it proved with Dr Tsarka.

The private detective investigating the theft is soon enmeshed in a troubling Oriental world lodged in the heart of London. Fu Manchu would also operate from a London base. Tsarka worked in a large room “furnished and upholstered to suit the fancy of a Piccadilly exquisite or art connoisseur” (The Radium Terrors 22). The description pointed to an effeminate taste for luxury and display. This is an over-ripe and unmanly world. The sumptuous tapestries, deeply piled cushions and elaborately embroidered scarlet ottoman confirm the suspicion that Tsarka is a man tainted by Oriental excess. The detective’s first sight of Tsarka confirms these dreadful fears: “He felt instinctively that he was under the surveillance of a master criminal, a man frail of body, but whose very presence exuded the Titanic energies of his mind” (The Radium Terrors 24). Tsarka’s shrunken and disfigured body may be read as a marker of the racial inferiority freely attributed to non-European peoples. Europe provided the measure of human beauty. Tsarka fell disastrously short of the ideal. While Tsarka’s feeble body prevents him from enjoying the fruits of a fully realised life, his mind appears to have grown disproportionately powerful, a condition clearly signalled by his “capacious brow.” The combination of immense intellectual energy and an enfeebled body is considered particularly dangerous. It created the mix of frustration, resentment and anger that produced the master criminal.

Dorrington informs the reader that Tsarka embodies “the pent-up vitality of a nation” (The Radium Terrors 97). The Orient represented by Tsarka, particularly Japan and to a degree, China, remains relatively powerless in world affairs, despite immense populations and considerable natural and human resources. Both nations had the potential to become much stronger than they were, making their weakened condition all the more galling. Yet both were old civilizations with impressive traditions of scholarship and learning. The intellectual resources of Tsarka’s Orient could hardly be denied, but the means of harnessing that power to productive ends is largely unachievable for a weak nation. Where the legitimate use of power is denied, capacious minds will turn their attention to criminal ends or so the reader is led to believe. Whereas the original owner of the radium, the Swiss scientist, Professor Moritz, was working on its curative applications, Tsarka is drawn to its criminal and destructive possibilities. Moritz is a healer and Tsarka a destroyer. He had harnessed his brain “for a conflict with the rich of England and America” (The Radium Terrors 339). The reader learns that the “Oriental mind” could be remarkably inventive, but its medical experiments were invariably turned to the discovery of new instruments of cruelty and torture.

Tsarka enjoys inflicting pain, but like Nikola he is a scrupulous observer of gentlemanly etiquette. That said, there is always a studied excess in his manner. Tsarka’s Oriental refinements are designed to prolong the pain of his victims. When he “salaamed facetiously” Tsarka drew attention to his power and mastery and the pleasure he took in seeing his adversary so disadvantaged. Exquisite manners are another of his instruments of torture and humiliation. The logic is clear enough. Often humiliated as a feeble little Japanese, Tsarka relishes any opportunity to humiliate Europeans. It is understood that the “Oriental mind” is given to sadism and humiliation, since this is thought consistent with an Eastern taste for inflicting pain. In the 1890s the Australian doctor and later correspondent for the London Times in Peking, George Morrison, was convinced that the nervous system of the Chinese was different from that of Europeans. In Morrison’s view, spelt out in his only book, An Australian in China (1895),
the Chinese did not feel pain as acutely as Europeans, requiring them to invent even more refined instruments of torture. By extension, a culture of torture emerges as an Oriental specialty.

The Orientalist repertoire also extends to movement and here the reptilian character of the East asserts itself. Tsarka is in the room one minute and gone the next: “With scarcely a sound he moved towards the maze of screens and slipped from the apartment” (The Radium Terrors 31). Nikolai is equally adept at soundless movement. What are we to make of this attribute? It endows Eastern movement with a silent fluidity that belongs more to the animal than the human world. More to the point, it provides another connection with the snakes that are so dear to Orientalist iconography. Of all the silent movers, the snake is among the quietest and most deadly, although cats were not far behind. Silence is also a powerful weapon, giving adversaries the advantage of surprise. The criminal masterminds of the Orient are invariably elusive figures whose appearances and disappearances defy normal logic. There is something decidedly unnerving in this ability to infiltrate places and spaces considered safely Western and secure. Silence is an attribute of invasive Asia just as it is the natural partner of watchfulness and of being watched. This silence is full of menace. When Tsarka moves with “scarcely a sound” the reader immediately senses his deadly intent. This is the world of the animal pounce, of the hunter and the hunted.

Silence is critical to Fu Manchu’s operations. His movements are always feline and his weapons are invariably subtle and often vaporous. He employs dacoits to do his dirty work, swift and mysterious beings who work under the cover of darkness. They kill their victims soundlessly with poisons and deadly gases. The “yellow peril” in the Fu Manchu novels is an unseen enemy whose danger is known only to a handful of prescient Orientalists like Sir Denis who struggle to convince even their most trusted colleagues that Oriental treachery is lodged at the centre of the British Empire. Nayland Smith is convinced that Dr Fu Manchu is the “advance-agent of a movement so epoch-making that not one Britisher, and not one American, in fifty-thousand has ever dreamed of it” (The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu 40). The “movement” is motivated by the elimination of the white races and the installation of Fu Manchu as Emperor of the World. The rare few who understood the threat had learnt to decode Oriental appearances. They were not fooled by the passivity commonly attributed to the Orient by those who should have known better.

Dr George Morrison was prominent among those who knew better. In 1910, at the height of his fame as the Times correspondent in Peking, he addressed the Authors’ Club in London on “The Awakening of China.” Morrison pointed out that Australia was much more alert to the danger from the awakening East than England. He approved the White Australia Policy and universal military training, measures that convinced Morrison that Australia understood the need to defend itself against a challenge from the East. Where Australia was awake to the problem England was “slumbering and snoring,” evidently unaware that the enemies of the West were “at our door” preparing to avenge themselves. Morrison’s message that for Australia the awakening East was an immediate reality rather than an airy abstraction echoes a central theme of Pearson’s National Life and Character. Morrison was well aware that Australia’s northern “door” opened directly onto Asia.

Morrison’s lecture aroused considerable interest. Dr Bernard Hollander, a scientific phrenologist, was in the audience and spoke in support of Morrison’s claim that the Chinese had an impressive future, basing his comments on the imposing dimensions of Chinese skulls. With such cranial capacity at their disposal Hollander believed great things could be expected of the Chinese. The lecture was widely reported in the press. The Morning Post reminded its readers of a prophecy by one of Britain’s leading Sinologists, Sir Robert Hart, that the Chinese “would repay with interest all the injuries and insults they had suffered at the hands of the European powers” (qtd. in Pearl 213). The cruel Orient
would turn its genius for torture upon the West. Rudyard Kipling had drawn attention to the same prophesy on a brief visit to Australia in the 1890s, reinforcing the view that the European powers had let loose a terrible force in Asia. It is quite possible that Sax Rohmer attended the Authors' Club gathering to hear Australia's leading authority on China's future, but even had he missed the lecture the themes taken up by Morrison and which were circulated in press reports of the address were familiar topics in the years before the First World War. It remained something of an imaginative leap to create Dr Fu Manchu, but the key ingredients were apparent at the Authors Club in 1910, including the awakening East, the mental power of the Chinese and the desire to avenge the injuries and insults inflicted on the East by Europe.

Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu novels capture a number of the key themes of twentieth century Orientalism. The Doctor was cast as the “yellow peril incarnate,” thereby linking him directly to Kaiser Wilhelm's popular coinage of the mid 1890s. His cranial capacity is likewise very clear. Each of the Fu Manchu novels describes the first meeting with the great Doctor. The reader learns that he has a brow of Shakespearian dimensions housing a brain with powers equivalent to the three finest intellects in Europe. While the brow is Shakespearian, the face is Satanic and the eyes catgreen and mesmerising:

invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of science past and present [. . .] and you have a mental picture of Dr Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man. (The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu 19)

It is also clear that Fu Manchu's criminality is directed to the downfall of the West. He has a geopolitical purpose and the backing of the Chinese government. There can be no doubt that Fu Manchu represents a formidable adversary unrestrained by the moral code that his opposite number, Sir Denis Nayland Smith, is expected to observe as an English gentleman.

Fu Manchu's great intellect is apparent in his linguistic prowess and scientific abilities. He speaks all the major world languages and while this certainly confirms his cleverness it also ensures both his mobility and his ability to understand the West while himself remaining hard to fathom. Fu Manchu is also a great medical scientist in the Nikola and Tsarina tradition. Here the "cruel cunning" attributed to the East turns abilities that might have been used to better the human condition towards destruction. The West, so these texts argue, used its intellect to improve the world whereas the mind of the East is given to cruelty and vengeance. One of the constants of the Fu Manchu narrative and an important element in the elaboration of the demonic East is the tragic folly of giving the East access to Western knowledge. Fu Manchu draws upon Eastern and Western medical traditions in his diabolical experiments, but this evil is magnified by his ability to use Western knowledge against the West itself. According to this schema, the deadliest "Orientals" and the cleverest exponents of surprise and concealment, are the most westernised. This apparent paradox is commonly explained in racial terms. Try as they might even the most accomplished Oriental students of the West would eventually discover that they could not become "white" and would always be excluded by white society.

The kinds of medical experimentation that attracted Dr Fu Manchu are hinted at rather than described in detail, but he is certainly a pioneer of biological warfare. When not hard at work trying to cross spiders and scorpions to create some horrible novelty to alarm his enemies he is creating new diseases. Among other accomplishments he is the world's greatest "fungalist" allowing him to develop new and deadly poisons. Murder means nothing to him. That said, the Doctor recognizes the importance of good manners and in his dealings with Sir Denis is careful to observe the outward courtesies of gentlemanly conduct. At the same time, Fu Manchu's evil is magnified rather than diminished by his conduct because it is clear that while he knows how a gentleman should behave he has no intention of allowing the rules of etiquette to impede his plans for world domination. Fu Manchu could distract
attention by small acts of conformity to Western standards while remaining committed to his larger goal.

A world run according to Fu Manchu’s principles could not help being a cruel and barbarous dictatorship, an evil Empire of torture, cruelty and arbitrary rule dictated by the whims and appetites of the Doctor. As with most of the schemes imputed to the East by the West there would be no nonsense about sexual equality or the rights of women. Fu Manchu is at his most Eastern and least inscrutable in insisting that women’s place is in the harem. The West may have considered the proper treatment of women one of the marks of a civilized society and evidence of its progressive credentials, but Fu Manchu would have none of it: “The myth you call Chivalry has tied your hands and stricken you mute” (Walker, 1999: 179). Of course, Fu Manchu has no difficulty feigning chivalrous conduct when it suits his purpose to do so, but he has no intention of freeing women from their bondage. The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu introduces the seductive figure of Karamaneh, an embodiment of Eastern beauty and a woman whose mere glance makes strong men weak. Yet, as clever and beautiful as she is, Karamaneh is enslaved by Fu Manchu and forced to further his evil designs. She has to appeal to chivalrous European males in order to find her freedom.

While Rohmer was the most successful exponent of the “yellow peril” theme, a similar fascination with the Chinese and their imperial ambitions is to be found in Edgar Wallace’s The Yellow Snake first published in 1926 and still available as a Pan Book in the 1960s. The reptilian motif in the title is repeated through the text where the leading Chinese figure, Fung Su, is referred to as both the “yellow snake” and the “yellow peril.” Fung Su studied at Oxford University where he acquired the slightly exaggerated drawl of the well-bred Englishman. As was so often the case in popular fiction, Fung Su’s accomplished impersonation of an educated English gentleman makes him appreciably more sinister than he would have been had he never left China. True to type, he is always perfectly turned out in an expensive suit and “shining silk hat,” but the effect is not quite right: “He was just a little overdressed, the diamond pin in his cravat just a little too large” (The Yellow Snake 48). He also, and this is telling, “affected a heavy perfume” that filled the room in a manner “unbearable to a man who was used to a more wholesome atmosphere” (The Yellow Snake 48). It is the familiar story of an effete and dandified style of masculinity masking a domineering streak of cruelty. Exotic perfumes also waft through the Fu Manchu novels, setting Nayland Smith’s nostrils a quiver. Fung Su’s true nature is rarely revealed, even when sorely provoked. “Only for the fraction of a second did the beast in him raise his head.” His control is remarkable and his “fathomless eyes” give nothing away. But for all his Oxford education and Western manners there is no prospect of Sing-Fu ever thinking like a “white man.” One of the China experts of the novel declares that you might “make a black man think white” in ten generations but you couldn’t change a “Chinaman’s mentality” in ten thousand years. (The Yellow Snake 52) This was at once a dismissive criticism and an affirmation that the Chinese were the most tenacious and enduring race on earth. They could be expected to outdistance their rivals. China was the irreducible Orient.

Although the Chinese were considered particularly prone to the maltreatment of women, it was regarded as a generalised Oriental phenomenon not something confined to a particular Asian race or culture. In another of the gendered dimensions of this discourse it was commonly assumed that the charming Orient would attack the West through its women. White women were not only thought to be softened by the comforts and temptations of modernity, but were often considered less aware of the dangers posed by the East (not least the danger of enchantment) than white men, a circumstance that reinforced the role of a chivalrous, warrior masculinity. The male was designed to keep Asia at bay, something women, frail vessels that they were, were thought incapable of doing. Once again, the westernised Orient was at its deadliest in such encounters as revealed in Madge Peterson’s The Lure of the Little Drum, winner of the Best Novel Competition for 1913 run by the British publishing house,
Andrew Melrose Ltd, with Joseph Conrad among the judges. Published in August 1913, the novel reached its fourth impression before the end of the year.

Peterson's novel was set against the splendid backdrop of the Raj. Esther, a woman of unimpeachable loveliness from a background that was not all it should have been, marries Gerald a determinedly cheerful, tiger-hunting chap. Gerald is not a thinker. He reads nothing, has few opinions and, out of concern for Esther, elects to go on a tiger hunt on their wedding night rather than upset her with a vulgar display of passion. Meanwhile, lurking in the background is the dreadful Ishaq Khan, a prince (certainly) but a rotten nonetheless. As Orientalist convention dictates, Khan's badness is made appreciably worse by his English education: "Ishaq Khan had done Oxford, the stamp of it was on him, in his easy unaffected voice, in his polite urbane manners" (The Lure of the Little Drum 18). Oxford again. Those who knew the ways of the Orient understand the danger. Behind Khan's undoubted "European polish lay the subtle native mind," a combination that resulted in vice when "embedded in the mind of an Oxford trained, European planned gentlemen" (The Lure of the Little Drum 18). It is not altogether clear from Peterson's account how this process worked, but it is clear that a native mind furnished with European polish produced a combined result more evil than anything purely Indian or European.

Poor Gerald is no match for a suave, splendidly robed seducer and, weakened by her tainted background, Esther falls into Ishaq Khan's encircling arms. Gerald is so shocked that he falls from his horse and enters a deep coma and the family, wanting to avoid a scandal, put it about that Esther had died suddenly from cholera. Khan's purpose is not amorous, but political vengeance. He has conceived a terrible hatred of the British and, putting his subtle native mind to work, plans to incarcerate Esther in his harem. There is a vacancy for this position as a white woman had recently died in Khan's harem, degraded, humiliated and ashamed. The Old India Hand of the novel (the obligatory Nayland Smith figure) understands the native mind and knows what Khan is up to but has trouble convincing his doctor friend. According to the Old Hand Khan is motivated by the "passion of his hate." Putting Esther into the harem satisfies Khan's "lust of cruelty." Worse still, the Old Hand goes on to explain, Khan seeks the "joy of degrading what we white men hold so dear, our women." White women were represented as a target in the war between the races, a terrible truth known only to the keenest students of the Oriental mind.

Many of the themes identified in the popular literature before the World War II continue, though more prominently in American popular culture than Australian. In the 1990s the airport novels of Stephen J. Cannell, Clive Cussler and Tom Clancy in Riding the Snake (1998), Flood Tide (1997) and The Bear and the Dragon (2000) respectively continue the Orientalist imagery of snakes, dragons and slithering evil. All of the novels achieved immense sales. Cussler and Clancy make regular appearances on the bestseller lists. Cussler's Flood Tide draws an explicit connection with Sax Rohmer's novels by suggesting that its leading Chinese figure is the reincarnation of Dr Fu Manchu. The flood tide of the title evokes Lothrop Stoddard's The Rising Tide of Color (1921) and all the tidal images of the flooding, inundating Chinese before and since. Each of the novels is preoccupied with masculinity and the need to demonstrate the superiority of the American male over his Chinese counterparts. In Clancy's case one of the approved characters warns his Chinese adversary against getting into a war with the United States, declaring: "Xue, your dicks aren't big enough to get in a pissing war with us" (The Bear and the Dragon 504). As an author with a huge following in the American armed forces this is an intriguing comment on the relationship between victory and sexual prowess and between defeat and sexual humiliation, topics now receiving a good deal of attention in the world media, not least in the Arab world. Indeed, these themes bring us back to the gate of the Abu Ghraib prison and eerily close to the geographical and intellectual centre of Said's Orientalism.
To its detractors, like the artist Raffielli, references to the “yellow peril” represented an absurd exaggeration of potential Oriental power. He could not have issued a more emphatic denial of the idea: “There is not, then, there never has been for three thousand years, a yellow peril; there never will be” (The Bear and the Dragon 504). The emphasis is Raffielli’s and was shared by many Orientalists who took the view that dead Oriental civilizations could not rise again. But what if stillness, silence and immobility denoted, not death, but watchfulness and patience? Was it possible that a gathering here and some whispered aises there disclosed a new stirring of the will? Might civilizations dismissed and disparaged as worthless reassert themselves with a renewed ferocity? The mysterious language of the “yellow peril” and the fiction written in its name addressed this new power and, however grudgingly, conceded that the awakening Orient might need to be accorded a measure of respect and a good deal more careful scrutiny. Moreover, it can hardly be overlooked that the awakening East was a good story. It certainly made Sax Rohmer a wealthy man. For Australians, situated all too invitingly in a seemingly empty continent on the edge of Asia, it appeared unwise to treat the possibility of a resurgent Orient with the lordly disdain accorded it by Raffielli. That was a European luxury many Australians felt they could not afford.

Fu Manchu embodied a new aesthetic of fear, a world of subtle clues and mysterious signs, a world of undeclared power and indirect conflict. The Rohmer novels look forward to the gathering sense of menace looming out of familiar surroundings that was the hallmark of Hitchcock’s films and a common ingredient in the survivalist anxieties of the Cold War.

---

**Works Cited**

Adams, Francis. “Daylight and Dark. White or Yellow: Which is to Go?” Boomerang 1 February 1888: n. pag.


——. Dr Nikola’s Experiment. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899.

——. A Bid for Fortune; Or, Dr Nikola’s Vendetta. London: Ward Lock, 1895.


Dawe, Carlton. Yellow and White. London: Jane Lane, 1895.


Lane, William [Sketcher]. “White or Yellow: The Race War of AD 1908.” Boomerang 18 February 1888 to 5 May 1888: n. pag.


National Images and Stereotypes: India Through Australian Eyes, 1850-1950

Bruce Bennett

The study of national images and stereotypes has slipped from fashion in some quarters since the rise of post-colonial theory in the 1980s followed by globalization studies in the 1990s. But as Wolfgang Zach (1987) ably reminds us, opposition to the study of national images was also opposed by universalist theorists in the 1950s and 1960s led by Rene Wellek (1972). Despite such opposition, then and since, national studies have continued in a variety of forms ranging from the impressionistic to the systematic. Stereotypes and auto-stereotypes, as well as more in-depth, qualitative analyses recur as writers from one nation attempt to describe or typify another. This essay attempts to explore some of the ways in which India and Indian people were presented in prose narratives by Australians between 1850 and 1950. The approach is eclectic, taking into account historical context, genre and the use of national image-making of selves and others during a century of changing ideas of the nation.

Few Indians may be aware of the pervasive lexical effects of the noun “India” on the southern hemisphere. In 1770, Captain James Cook’s naturalist on the Endeavour, Joseph Banks (28 April 1896), wrote: “Our boat proceeded along shore, and the Indians followed her at a distance” (qtd. in Ramson 324). This early linkage of Indians with a people later to be called “aborigines,” “aboriginals” or “blacks” has its counterpart in early twenty-first century scholarship as a number of early career or senior scholars from India investigate psychological, social and environmental links between indigenous Australian people and similarly underprivileged Indians, especially Dalit people. And by one of those strange coincidences, “India” is becoming a favourite name for European Australian girls. I have not yet heard of “Australia” as a favourite name among people of the Indian subcontinent.

Thanks to, or curses upon, the British empire, twenty-first century Australians can reflect upon a partially shared socio-cultural history of representations and mis-representations of India and Indian people with certain opinion-makers in Britain that represents a quite different pattern from Australia’s historic relationship with our other great northern neighbour, China. Invasion scare novels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for example, feature China and Japan as invaders of Australia, but never India (see Walker, 1999: Chapter 8). By the 1960s, Australian novelist Christopher Koch could write his novel Across the Sea Wall (1965) which showed a certain rapport with India, while Greg Clark wrote his symptomatic analysis of a still current attitude, In Fear of China (1967).

By contrast with Clark’s litany of perceived historical, political and psychological barriers to engagement with China, Koch shows his Australian protagonist travelling through India and recognising that he and his Indian friends are really “brothers under the skin.” But it’s an edgy, taut relationship between Robert O’Brien and Sunder Singh, which is exemplified in a stand-off between them on Marine Drive, Madras, when Sunder speaks out:

“You see, O’Brien,” he said, you bloody Australians don’t know what you are. You don’t think much of
colonialism, but then suddenly you’re waving the Union Jack. It’s disheartening.” They passed a statue of Queen Victoria, on a plinth beside the Drive, and he pointed up at her. “There you are, why don’t you salute her? You’d like her back, wouldn’t you? (Across the Sea Wall 96)

The novelist does not let his character off this particular hook. Indeed, he reinforces the point:

[...] to his own surprise, O’Brien found himself looking up at the pudding-faced queen with a certain wistfulness. Relief of the Raj, bereft in independent India, she grinned in the terrible heat, a figure of fun, her majesty a joke; and he felt sorry for her, Victoria Regina, Empress of India, perhaps simply because she was familiar, and she had a sudden thirst for anything familiar. (Across the Sea Wall 96)

Koch’s Indian scene reverberates backwards into our real colonial history and forwards into the new reality of the American empire, which is still awkward and tentative, though developing, cultural relationship with the countries of Asia, including India. (I differentiate here between the notion of deeper cultural relations, which are my central interest, and the development of trade and commerce, though the two are clearly linked in some respects.)

In more visionary mode, Christopher Koch (1987) also wrote a scenario wherein a greater “family closeness” might be developed through spiritual and cultural links between Australia and the countries of what he called “the Indo-European zone,” especially Australia, Indonesia and India:

Without myth, the spirit starves, and postcolonial Australia, we are going to have to build a new myth out of old ones. And I would suggest that these old ones will not belong simply to the European zone, but to the Indo-European zone, of which India and Indonesia are both inheritors, as we are. Other great cultures, such as China, we may admire, we may gain from, but we will not find such family closeness with the sense of common roots. (Crossing the Cap 15-16)

I have considered the prospects for such development further in an essay, titled “A Family Closeness? Australia, India, Indonesia,” in The Regenerative Spirit (2003).

We have been made aware recently of fundamental geological links between Australia and the countries of Asia through the earth’s plate. We are told by seismologists that when the India plate—which is part of the Indo-Australian plate and is drifting north-east an average of 5cm a year—suddenly slipped 15 metres below the Burmese plate in late December 2004, the seabed was thrust upwards by 10 metres. It would normally take three centuries for the India plate to move as much as it did in that instant. At any rate, the fourth largest earthquake recorded since 1900 unleashed what an Indian fisherman later called “the angry sea” which devastated many coastal areas in the region (Lusetich 13). It remains to be seen how the slow recovery from this catastrophic tsunami will be played out in terms of “a family closeness,” or otherwise. The early signs of international cooperation in this process are positive.

Against the background of such shattering events, the smaller human dramas of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Australians’ encounters with Indians, and the idea of India, may seem inconsequential. Yet these are the kinds of small but significant human interactions, played out under the banners of different empires and geo-political forces, that are proceeding all around our region today. Perhaps, in retrospect, we can even afford the ironic smiles that our forebears’ represented behaviour, as displayed in short stories, novels and travel narratives, may evoke.

For in retrospect, it is clear that many white Australians who visited India, or thought about inhabitants of the sub-continent, saw themselves as proxy representatives of the British empire, however lowly their status in Australia may have been. Behind this, of course, was a racism that saw “white men” as superior to “brown men” (men, rather than women taking the role of representatives of their race). This, we have seen, was a continuing tradition of thought and attitude since at least Captain Cook’s voyages in the 1770s. But for the particulars of lived experience and their emotional tonalities we turn here to literature, in particular prose narratives.

The place to begin is perhaps in the mid-nineteenth century in the figure of John Lang, accurately described by C. D. Narasimhaiah (1980) as “the first Australian-born novelist on Indian soil” (xxi). The
grandson of a Jewish convict at Botany Bay, Lang was educated in Australia and in England and moved to India in 1842, where he continued in his profession as a lawyer, wrote novels, stories and a travel book, and edited a newspaper—The Mofussilite (1845-1876) in Meerut. A recent essay by Rick Hosking (2003) has examined Lang’s first novel set in India, which bears a typically long Victorian title: The Wetherbys, Father and Son; Or, Sundry Chapters of Indian Experience (1853). The book was first serialised in Fraser’s Magazine (1853) in London and then in The Mofussilite (1855), before being republished in book form in 1853 by Chapman and Hall. Hosking summarises his impressions of The Wetherbys:

[The Wetherbys contains] no fine and solemn writing about Empire. Instead, Lang describes the sordid experience of cantonment life where rakish subalterns and ancient, incapable colonels are supposedly in charge of disorderly regiments, where “the Titans of the Punjab” are seen as barely able to cope with disorderly martial situations and brittle domestic arrangements. India as a place has little impact on the colonists, and India as a place of complex and ancient cultures simply does not exist. The few Indians who are represented are without exception subordinate and inferior, and typically nameless servants. (49)

Nevertheless, Hosking suggests an Australian slant to Lang’s writing of India as that of “a larrikin outsider” and “against the convention which found romance in empire” (53). An aspect of research that remains to be done is a full bibliographical record of Lang’s short fiction and other writings about India. But the available record suggests a mid-nineteenth century perspective on British India that was as alert to the absurdities of expatriate life there as in Australia.

Many Australian narratives of India are stories of travel. As David Walker (1999) has shown, Australia’s first major travel book about India is James Hingston’s The Australian Abroad (1879), which is witty, informative and unrepentantly imperialist in outlook (17-19). Hingston’s enthusiasm for new places is infectious, if at times also bumptious. Walker remarks that Hingston was drawn to “the strangeness and intractable difference of the mysterious East” and was influenced in this by the Arabian Nights tales (17). According to Hingston, India had a special place in any educated man’s imagination and was seen to have a spiritual dimension: to see India was to learn “there is an object in life” (qtd. in Walker 19). Hingston’s wit is his saving grace, and perhaps a sign of an emergent nineteenth century Australian-ness. Like Clive James, Hingston places an image of himself at the forefront of his travel stories, where he is vulnerable to the charms of places and people, and he looks for philosophies of living behind appearances. In his short narrative about a visit to the Parsees’ Towers of Silence at Bombay in The Australian Abroad (see Hotel Asia 46-50), Hingston light-heartedly presents himself as a somewhat clumsy detective wanting to solve a mystery, who drops his new hat into an enclosure at the Towers and goes searching for it. He feels like “bluebeard’s wife among the remains of her predecessors in the forbidden chamber” (49) and is swooped by the vultures who are there to pick the bones of the dead. Almost a century later, in the mid-1960s during a stopover at Bombay from the P & O liner, The Himalaya, on my way from Australia to study in Oxford, I too visited this same tourist site, but with a greater readiness to accept its evocation of awe and horror rather than to see myself as a detective and travel guide. I noticed that some of my fellow travellers, though, viewed the Towers with the same jaunty insouciance as Hingston had shown eighty-five years earlier. Cross-cultural perspectives on religious observances often seem absurd to those steeped in a particular way of seeing things.

Military life provided one of the main avenues for Australian understanding of life in nineteenth and early twentieth century India. Many narratives reflect this, ranging from journalistic sketches in magazines or newspapers such as The Australian Town and Country Journal (January 1870-June 25 1919), the Bulletin (1888-Present), or The Lone Hand (1907-1921) to the whimsical, historical romance tales of Ethel Anderson and Molly Skinner’s novel Tucker Sees India (1937). I will return to both of these women writers shortly.

A theme that runs through much early Australian writing about India is the puzzle of masculinity. The “manly” military virtues of courage, strength and solidarity are comically tested, for example, in
an anonymously published piece, “A Strange Night-watchman: A Story of Northern India,” in The Town and Country Journal in 1889. The story features the fears of a tremulous English visitor, advisedly named Mr Tremmel, when he visits military and missionary friends at a hill station in northern India:

[Mr Tremmel] looked up at India as a “raving tiger” crouching behind every tree, and a boa-constrictor, as long as a ship’s cable, hidden in every thicket. (“A Strange Night-watchman” 29)

His fears seem to be realized at the missionary’s house, when he sees a six-foot black and yellow snake gliding along the floor towards him. He yells loud and long before he is told that this is Dickie, the “house-snake” and a pet of the children. Like colonial tales of Englishmen lost in the Australian bush, this story purports to show the comical shortcomings of men who fail to live up to the Boys’ Own Annual adventure tale format of stoical courage in adversity. Such tales reinforce notions of wild and exotic otherworlds where only “true” men can be men. The men who retreat in fear provide a comic counterpoint to the many other action/adventure tales of tiger or cheetah hunting in India, in which men are said to be men.

Women’s fiction contains some illuminating comparisons. Both Ethel Anderson and Mollie Skinner experienced something of barracks life in India and used it as a point of departure in their fiction. Born in England of Australian parents in 1883, Anderson was educated in Sydney before, in 1904, she married a British officer who served for ten years with the Indian Army. Anderson’s colourful Indian Tales (1948) and Little Ghosts (1959) range in their subject matter from the sixteenth century to the last days of the British Raj, and show an appreciation of Indian legends and folklore.

The women of India especially fascinate Anderson and many of her tales deal with thwarted love, or love triumphant, in the face of military violence or racial difference and discrimination, past and present. In the long story “Mrs. James Greene,” the eponymous heroine survives uprisings, violence and threats to her virtue in Sitapur to become the adored mistress of Mirza Khan, to whom she in her turn devotes the rest of her life (Little Ghosts 57-87).

Anderson takes an inquisitive and ironic stance towards the complexities of racial and cultural inheritance in India in her story “The Eurasian.” In Dinapore, where the story is set, Anderson notes a tendency towards isolation in the Eurasian community. Such households, she observes:

vary as their blood fluctuates between British, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Dutch origins on the paternal side and between the admixture of Mogul or Hindu strains on the maternal. (Little Ghosts 180)

She also observes the extreme fascination of British men, especially for Eurasian women, and the ironies of fate which sometimes enable the crossing of racial lines. Her appreciation of India, past and present, shows a curiosity about exotic facts and details, and is at times rhapsodic in its exuberant, peacock display of language. The following scene-setting paragraph from “The Eurasian” shows something of the flavour of Anderson’s prose:

So these figures met, the servant Nedo with his child, the jealous colonel, the young soldier, the Eurasian girl, the half-seen watchman by the wall. They stayed grouped among the immense trees, under a sickle moon, beside an unruly river. They had collected there by chance, as fortuitous as those which assembled the butterflies in their dances above the red bouvardias, as casually gathered together, as carelessly dispersed. Yet forces which governed the human pattern—hate, greed, love—were perhaps deeper in origin than the love of sunlight, the joy of colour, that linked the dancing butterflies together above the red flowers. It may be so. For a moment the jealous colonel saw the young Eurasian girl in Hew’s arms. For a moment Hew held her, a girl whose name was unknown to him (later, under tragic circumstances, he was to swear ignorance of it), and then the pattern made by those meeting figures dissolved. They parted and went their several ways. (Little Ghosts 186)

Anderson’s tale of mystery and romance ends ironically and unexpectedly, with the “jealous colonel” triumphantly defying racial barriers in the pursuit of true love—which may be truer for him than for his lover.
Mollie Skinner's novel *Tucker Sees India*, is less subtle and insightful than Anderson's stories of India, but more definitively and selfconsciously Australian. Skinner was the co-author with D. H. Lawrence of *The Boy in the Bush* (1924), a novel about the tribulations of English settlers in Western Australia in the 1880s which shows the passionate individuality of one of them, Jack Grant, in defiance of a conventional, colonial society and a sense of the threatening bush. *Tucker Sees India* draws on Skinner's time when she worked during much of the World War I as a nurse at hospitals for soldiers in Calcutta, Rawalpindi near the frontier, Peshawar at the end of the Indian railway, Bunnu, the Malakand Fort, Lahore, Baroda and elsewhere (Skinner, *The Fifth Sparrow*: 14-15). As an Australian nurse in Lady Minto's private nursing service, Skinner was aware of the way Australians could be put down as mere "colonials" by their British superiors and this insight informs her novel. Skinner's leading character, Tucker, is a member of the Australian Imperial Force sailing for Europe, who is left behind in Bombay when he misses the boat after a hard night out. Tucker is a rough-and-ready Australian male of his generation who gets caught up in a number of Indian adventures en route to the "real" war. At the end, he has "seen India" and is ready for anything life may throw at him.

In Skinner's novel, Tucker is a feckless but generous Australian, basically uninterested in authority or position, who is happy to throw himself into any adventure and make a joke of it. He specialises in narrow scrapes. In Chapter 7 of *Tucker Sees India*, for example, our hero, who has been in India for only a fortnight finds himself caught up in a kidnapping for ransom of a young English woman by tribesmen in the Khyber Pass. He disguises himself as a mad mullah and, failing to find himself a "black tracker"—he claims he would be able to find one in a similar situation in Australia—he travels by camel with a local man, Ali Mohammed, to free the white woman. The events that follow are a comical adventure narrative of stock characters and narrow escapes. As he hurriedly disposes from his mad mullah outfit, after saving the girl who has caused him too much trouble, Tucker remarks that "if the only way to succeed in such stunts as these is to be the other fellow, we'll get away before the enemy knows I'm me" (*Tucker Sees India* 132). This is of course comical, opportunistic disguise rather than the more subtle merging of personalities in search of deeper understanding which we might find in other kinds of novels or stories. It shows the kind of straightforward narrative adventure tale that D. H. Lawrence transformed from Skinner's draft in the *The Boy in the Bush*.

The popular British image of an exotic, exciting, extravagant India on which Skinner could draw, albeit with a certain humorous undercutting of British pomposity, is deployed by a number of short fiction writers in Australian magazines and newspapers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Albert Dorrington's "The Mouth of the Moon-God" in *The Town and Country Journal* in 1907 is a good example. Dorrington uses the figure of the legendary American pirate and buccaneer of the Pacific, Captain "Bully" Hayes, to tell a yarn of an adventure in India after he has landed in Calcutta.

Dorrington's yarn is purportedly told in an opium shop in Port Darwin to a group of "shellers and bêche-de-mer men." The story's subject matter and theme hark back to Rider Haggard and forward to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). "Bully" Hayes, the storyteller within Dorrington's yarn, is an unreconstructed scoundrel who loots foreign treasure wherever he can find it. The specific adventure he recalls takes place in a Hindu temple in Meeraj, where a guide, Kedda Singh, has taken Hayes and his mate. The guide persuades the men to put aside a sack of their treasure from the floor of the castle, where the skeletons of previous looters, dead of the plague, lie around:

some lay in the open courtyard, others sprawled in front of the altars, with silver and gold gee gaws clutched in their skeleton hands. We could see, too, where the jackals had been and stripped them bare, leaving nothing but the bones and the jewels. (*The Mouth of the Moon-God* 187)

Undeterred, the pirates continue their gothic adventure, but they have not counted on the treachery of their Indian guide. Persuaded by Singh to reach into the jaws of the moon-god to retrieve his tooth,
Hayes is trapped when the jaws snap shut on his arm. A bizarre comedy ensues when Hayes's companion, Bill, uses a crowbar to smash the moon-god's face in and free his mate. The fabulous tooth is lost and Jeddah Singh escapes with the loot. No moral is drawn from this tale. Hayes, the loser on this occasion, concludes that much gold and silver remains in Indian temples. The American pirate vows he will return to "get some more one of these days." An old dream of imperial India—of a treasure trove to be plundered—is played out for Western readers.

A recurrent feature of exotic India in Australian magazine and newspaper stories in the early twentieth century is the life of Majarajahs and their retinues. Australian playwright Louis Esson's story "My Friend, the Maharajah" (1910), published in the Bulletin, is a witty spoof on excessive wealth and the extravagant styles of living it generates. The chief figure of this story is the sporting Maharajah of Jodhpur, whose tailor has fashioned the Jodhpur riding breeches which became famous around the polo-playing world and beyond. Louis Esson's socialistic views do not lead him to sober criticism of the Maharajah's excesses, however. In present-day terms, his point of view might be described as that of a "chardonnay socialist." Indeed, his own Australian-derived love of sport draws him into an affectionately humorous account of quintessential Jodhpur polo among the Maharajah's elite followers and friends:

Was this polo, or was it only a dream? They didn't play that kind of game in Victoria. It was fierce. The Jodhpur team? Well, there was his Highness a reckless rider, famous for his dash, meteoric. There was Fate Singh, as solid as the Rock of Ages. There was Zelm Singh, blue-eyed, a fierce set look in his eyes, canyoning all around the gallant English officers, and giving them nought. And finally there was Dokal Singh, the world's champion.

"Who shall describe Dokal? A handsome man, nearly 6 ft. high, 12 1/2 stone, perfect in build, a cavalier in manner, a very Napoleon of polo. As soon as he was everywhere, two men trying in vain to stop him. Full back, his defence was as that of Gibraltar. Shooting for goal, he would have bagged all the peanuts in the Eastern markets. His attack was a charge of the heavy brigade, officers, ponies, even his Highness himself, if he were in the road, being bunched, and then scattered like chaff blown before the autumn gale [. . .] he was a whole team in himself, a champion, a Caesar. He was the personal factor in history. He moulded events." ("My Friend, the Maharajah" 40)

The Australian visitor, fêted by the Maharajah, seems to accept and enjoy these sporting excesses—in hunting, horse-races and billiards as well as polo—and the hyperbolic heroes that grow from them. "The sporting Maharajah takes sport seriously," says an observer, admiringly. His companion agrees: "The stables—they are the State." ("My Friend, the Maharajah" 40).

Esson's visit to India in 1908 also included a string of articles, essays and stories for The Lone Hand, an Australian rationalist journal which both played up the fear of China and Japan and criticised the morals and manners of the British in India and Australia. This kind of anti-imperialist nationalism, like Esson's rather theoretical socialism, was an avenue to uncertainty and confusion. As David Walker has shown, Esson mocked the "injurious mix of racial arrogance, brutality and bureaucracy" in British India and the imperialists' "tendency to see 'sedition' everywhere," and urged Australians to dissociate themselves from the British in India (35). At the same time, he was drawn to the eccentric individuality of maharajahs and to images of traditional village life in India.

If military life, and the high life of British and Indian elites are generally preferred by Australian writers in the era of the Raj to the life of the streets, and the ambiguities and troubling doubts about foreign occupation of India, there are nevertheless some exceptions. While many writers sketchily refer to beggars or the anonymous life of crowded streets and bazaars, Mary C. Elkington's story "The Soul of the Melon Man," published in The Lone Hand in 1908, uses the form of a fable to contemplate foreign ways of thinking and believing, and how they may affect giving and receiving. In "The Soul of the Melon Man," an Ayah tells her memsahib about how, despite being hungry herself, she gives some pâna to a poor, hungry family. What has helped her to do this, she says, is "the soul of the water-melon man hovering near." Then follows a tale about a seller of melons in the bazaar who was once generous but has
selfishly and dishonestly grown relatively well-off by cutting thin slices or giving dry, stale pieces of melon to little children and other customers. When a traveller passes, he finds the water-melon man asleep beneath a tree with his soul departed from him in the branches above. The traveller persuades the Soul to return to the sleeping body which, with some grumbling it does. The traveller then gives the renewed Melon Man two melons, to recommence his trade, one to eat himself and one for his soul which, “if that is starved it is better that a man should cease to be” ("The Soul of the Melon Man" 55). After some temptation, the seller of melons responds to his now indwelling soul and becomes kind and generous again. When the soul grows, he feels it blossoming “through all his being” ("The Soul of the Melon Man" 55). Thus, the Ayah tells her Memashib, when “we who pause and put our own needs before the sad lack of others, we hear the rustling wings of the melon seller’s soul” ("The Soul of the Melon Man" 55). It is a tale designed to appeal to the better, feminine self of imperious foreigners, which female rather than male writers in English seem more licensed to draw attention to. The contemplation of a single soul in this story transcends the confused messages of the crowded streets of poor people.

By the 1920s, a number of fissures were appearing in the easy confidence expressed by British authorities and their sometimes resistant friends and allies in India, such as the Australians. Mahatma Gandhi had begun his strategy of non-violent confrontation with India’s British rulers in 1920. E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India, which showed the near impossibility of an equal friendship even among liberal, educated men of goodwill across the racial divide was published in 1924. Occasional stories in Australian magazines and newspapers in this decade also showed cracks in the wall.

Such a story is R. Francis Strangman’s “Black and White,” which appeared in The Triad in 1926. The story’s title seems to invite the rejoinder, “There’s no such thing as black and white.” The first-person narrator is identified early as an Australian who tends to see things in terms of his home country. As he sits on the verandah of his bungalow, where he is lord of all, he surveys the scene at dusk:

Looking before me, I could see the dull green rolling plain scarred by yellow sheep-tracks; the narrow winding river and the trees, like willows, dotted along its banks; beyond this again the wheatfields, miles in extent, and the little white farmhouses. Away in the distance, dark ranges of hills. What a pity there were no rabbit-proof fences. ("Black and White" 35)

The writer has already shown readers that this Australian newcomer in India is a dreamer who does not see clearly what is before him. He is an unreliable observer. He is sufficiently self-aware, however, to recognise in himself “the patronising attitude of all newcomers” when he speaks with his servant and bearer Naghu, and is mystified when Naghu speaks nervously and passionately about the “damn Parsees” who are alleged to be taking the best jobs from other Indians. These are deep waters and the Australian is adrift in them. He recognises that in any conversation with an Indian there are “so many detonators waiting to be touched off” ("Black and White" 35). He is even more surprised that evening when he learns from his chief that the bearer is using a false name and is suspected of murdering a Parsee a couple of months ago. He must therefore be dismissed. But the story has a twist in the tail. The bearer has been using drugs supplied by Europeans—coca in this case—and a neat exchange between the newcomer and his chief concludes the story:

“We do cause rather a lot of trouble—by being here, I mean—don’t we, sir”?

“Oh yes. That’s one reason we’ve got to stay."

“Shall I get you a drink, sir?”

“Oh please. Hell of a day this.”

“Yes, sir. Hell of a day.” ("Black and White" 35)

Such stories hint at an unconscious sphere of colonial relations which Bart Moore-Gilbert (1996) has discerned in Homi Bhabha’s recognition of “complicitous kinds of psychic affect circulating between
coloniser and colonised" (5) In the 1920s, even in distant Australia, relations with India can be seen to become more interesting, intriguing, complex and dangerous than the prospect of cheetahs or tigers in the jungle. Yet it must be remembered that Australia was still six colonies of Britain until 1901 and the colonial hangover persisted until at least the mid-twentieth century.

What must be admitted is that none of the Australian story writers referred to in this essay from the mid-nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century saw India or Indians with quite the range, depth and perceptive enthusiasm of Alfred Deakin, who was to become Australia’s most literate and visionary Prime Minister. (Deakin University at Geelong, near Melbourne, reminds us of him.) Deakin vigorously promoted a federated Commonwealth of Australia during the 1890s and was a three-time Prime Minister of the fledgling nation in the early 1900s.

At the invitation of the editor of the Age newspaper, Deakin visited India for two months in 1890, from which a series of articles and two books, Irrigated India (1893) and Temple and Tomb (1893) emerged. Deakin’s first biographer, Walter Murdoch (1923), remarks that, “if his stay in India was brief, the preparation for it had been spread over many years of study; he knew the history of the country as few Englishmen knew it” (170). Although he considered British rule a net benefit to Hindus in India, Deakin remarked that “Officialdom is nowhere more rampant than in India”; but that “the net result is a beneficent tyranny.” He praised knowledgeably the irrigation systems of India and the temples and tombs (Murdoch 172-173). Nor were Deakin’s essays restricted to buildings and landscapes. An indication of the broad sweep of humanistic thinking allied with an astute sense of policy development that informs Deakin’s Irrigated India is shown in the following brief quotation:

We are near enough to readily visit India and be visited [. . .]. Its students might come to the universities of our milder climate, instead of facing the winter of Oxford, Paris or Heidelberg. Our thinkers may yet become authorities upon questions which need personal acquaintance with India and its peoples. (Murdoch 172-173)

As Australia’s first major international statesman, Alfred Deakin needs to be re-read and reconsidered. As a man of letters, he reminds us of the traditions, including literature, that provide an avenue of continuing linkage between Australia and the Indian subcontinent as our two-way exchanges increase. He also reminds us that, although stereotyping will continue, and is perhaps necessary, imagination and thought together can lead to deeper relationships between countries. The “family closeness” that novelist Christopher Koch envisaged between the literate peoples of Australia and India needs to be explored further and the links that were being forged back then brought seriously into play once again.

---

Endnote

1 This essay is a revised version of a lecture given at Jadavpur University, Calcutta, on 8 February 2005 and was first published in From “English Literature to Literature in English? International Perspectives: Festschrift in Honour of Wolfgang Zach, ed., Michael Kenneally et al. (Heidelberg: Winter House, 2005) 77-90.

---

Works Cited


Lang, John. The Wetherbys, Father and Son; or, Sundry Chapters of Indian Experience. London: Chapman & Hall, 1853.


Observing Australia as “Member of an Alien and Conquered Race”: Nineteenth Century Indian Travellers’ Accounts

Margaret Allen

The examination of how Australia is perceived by people from the Asian region is important, yet it remains a much neglected project. (Broinowski and Milner)

Much of the recent examination of travel writing has been centred upon the white European or North American traveller’s description of the world and often of the third world and the exotic (see Pratt 1993). In a recent collection of travel writing there are only brief mentions of what can be termed “writing back” where colonised people, those usually written about, reverse the gaze to write about Europe and the metropolitan centre (see Hulme and Youngs 10, 254-255). Within the travel genre, white Australian writers have written of travels in Europe, America and in Asia (see Pesman et al. 1996). From the nineteenth century, Australians have also written about travels to India, China and Japan (see Walker 1999). While travellers, chiefly from Europe and North America have written of their travels in Australia; for much of the period of white settlement, Australia was largely closed to visitors and travellers from East Asia, South East Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Perhaps therefore, it is not surprising that there are relatively few descriptions of Australia and Australians from visitors from these close neighbours.

In exploring some Asian accounts of Australia, written from the nineteenth into the twenty-first centuries, Alison Broinowski (2003 and 2004) has focussed largely upon writers and travellers from China and Japan. She and Milner (2004) found that in writing for their readers at home that these travellers operated within an established discourse about Australia, which appeared to be based upon “enduring early impressions of Australia” which “seem either to have been based on the same sources or to result from preconceptions that existed even before the observers arrived in Australia” (3).

Thus,

It seems almost obligatory to affirm readers’ expectations by commenting on Australia’s Westernness or Britishness, its small population, wide open spaces, agriculture, exotic animals and the leisurely lifestyle of Australians, before getting down to anything more original. (Broinowski and Milner)

While many of the accounts discussed by Broinowski and the contributors to the collection, Double Vision (2004) deal with the twentieth century, Paul Macgregor (2004) examines accounts of nineteenth century Chinese immigrants’ views of colonial Australia (see 41-60). At the high point of Chinese immigration, during the gold rushes, there were around fifty thousand Chinese in Australia. Macgregor uses a number of sources, particularly the pamphlet, The Chinese Question in Australia written in 1879 by some leading Chinese in Victoria, and points to others, “The pages of metropolitan and country newspapers are rich sources of information about Chinese people and their views” (45).
During the later nineteenth century Indians were also travelling around the world and writing about the places visited. Britain was a favoured destination and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition held in London in 1886 was a great drawcard. Burton (1996) has noted that this fuelled an upsurge of Indian travel writing in the late nineteenth century. “1886 marked the beginning of a spate of travelogues written in English by Indian men, many of them had either travelled to London to visit the exhibition, or used it as a pretext for writing a guidebook of the imperial metropolis” (127-128; also see Ramabai 2003). Here the colonised turn their gaze back upon their imperial rulers and the economic system upon which they rested. In their writing on the centres of metropolitan power they demonstrate the ambivalence of colonial discourse (Babha 1984). These texts in part praise the imperial civilising, but by examining their rulers at home, they also deflate their pretensions and de-mystify them for their Indian readers.

During the late nineteenth century a number of Indian men came to Australia, although they were few when compared with the size of the Chinese community. In 1901 it has been estimated there were up to 7,637 Indians in Australia. In 1911, a decade after the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act, they numbered 3,698 (de Lepervanche 24). Many of these worked as hawkers, labourers or camel drivers in various parts of the country, some staying only a few years, while others established themselves in Australia, only rarely returning to India to visit family.

The lives and experiences of these Indians in Australia have been seen as largely irrelevant to Australian history (see de Lepervanche 1984; Allen 2005, 2006 and 2009). While such men wrote home to family and friends, few such accounts of Australia seem to have survived. Many of the men who came to Australia were not literate, Tatia (2004), however, discovered in a brief survey of the Amritsar newspaper, Khalsa Samachar for 1910-1911, a number of letters and reports from Sikhs living abroad, including some from Australia (see 47-55). It is possible that further research will uncover more such information.

However, there were some better-educated Indian travellers to Australia in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. Manorambai, daughter of the famed Indian feminist and Christian, Pandita Ramabai came to Australia with the American missionary Minnie Abrams to observe religious revivals. However she does not seem to have left any account of her visit. A number of other Christian converts visited, including Nunda Lall Doss, who is discussed below. In the early twentieth century, the Rajah of Podukkottai, a south Indian principality, visited Australia from March 1915, marrying the Melbourne woman Molly Fink (see Duyker and Younger 1991). In 1922, V. Srinivasa Sastri P. C. toured to meet community leaders address public meetings on the matter of full citizenship rights for Indians domiciled in Australia (Broinowski, 2003: 94; Allen 2004). His reports touched largely on official matters. There were a few independent travellers, such as Sullaiman Shah Mahomed, whose account is also examined below.

This chapter discusses the accounts of two male travellers. These were Nunda Lall Doss who toured Australia in 1888, on behalf the London Missionary Society and Sullaiman Shah Mahomed, a businessman who came to Australia in 1893. In considering these accounts, we cannot simply classify them as Indians “writing back,” in the same way that Indians visiting and writing about London might be seen. They were colonised Indian men, but rather than visiting the centre of imperial power, they were visiting other colonies of the same imperial power.

However, as Leela Gandhi (1998) has pointed out, the Australian settler colonies were not colonies of the British in the same way that India was. She writes that settler societies, such as the Australian colonies, did not stand “in the same relationship to colonialism as those societies [such as India] which […] experienced the full force and violence of colonial domination” (169).
While the Australian colonists, in their largely self-governing colonies shared “racial” and cultural backgrounds with the British, India “the jewel in the crown” was economically and symbolically crucial to the power of the British Empire, whereas the Australian colonies were of relatively lesser importance. Furthermore, the Australian settlers were also colonizing within Australia, the dispossession of and violent assaults upon Indigenous peoples and their lands and culture, offering some parallels with the positions of the colonised Indians. At the time these Indian men came to Australian shores, “racially” restrictive immigration policies were being debated and developed in the various colonies. These depended upon powerful contemporary discourses about racial hierarchies, which both these Indians deployed in their own interests and against the Chinese and others deemed to be “racially” inferior, but which, simultaneously, had the power to locate them as “racially” inferior. Although the Australian colonial immigration measures were largely aimed at the Chinese at this period, both writers exhibit an awareness that these ideologies might equally be deployed against them. While Chinese and Indians might look with dismay at the developing ideologies of “the white man” in the Australian colonies, so too did a number of the British rulers in India and Britain, who represented the Australians as brash and vulgar (see Curthoys 2003; Lake 2005).

These Indian visitors wrote amid all these contradictory and varied discourses and in these texts their ambivalent positioning sees them shift between and around the poles of contemporary issues. These men were in Bhabha’s terms, almost the same, but “not quite/not white” (132). For example, they move between admiration of the great economic and social developments of Australia, another part of the British world to which they belonged, to criticism of British imperialism and greed, from an apparent understanding and justification of the Australian colonists’ concerns with Chinese immigration, to sympathy with Chinese and Indian immigrants dealing with restrictive policies, from observations of “primitive” races to some empathy with Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, as this paper will explore, these writers’ accounts somewhat confirm Broinowski’s finding about Chinese and Japanese travellers’ accounts, in that they discoursed upon the beauty of Australian landscapes and the young and modern Australian cities, as well as referring to Australian friendliness towards them. While these accounts are glowing in parts, however also within these texts there is a critical approach to British imperialism and colonial racism. These perspectives emerge in-frequently, at times in the midst of apparently neutral description, but also in a more pointed fashion in discussions of immigration and “race.”

Nunda Lall Doss and Sullaiman Shah Mahomed came from different parts of India and were differently located to each other and to the different audiences, which they addressed. Nunda Lall Doss was a middle-aged Bengali from Kolkata. As a young man in 1857 he had converted to Christianity. From what little information is available, he seems to have made his life and career in relation to the institutions of Christianity within India and more globally. In East Bengal he was associated for a time with the Australian Baptist Missionaries, but made this tour under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. He left home in 1887, travelling in Britain where he addressed many missionary gatherings. He made a brief side-trip to Paris, before proceeding to the Australian and New Zealand colonies. He visited Tasmania, Sydney, Melbourne and Geelong, Adelaide and some rural townships nearby before returning to India in mid-July 1888.

In 1893 Doss published his Reminiscences, English and Australian Being an Account of a Visit to England, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, Ceylon etc. This document of 242 pages was published at the London Missionary Society in Calcutta and must be seen as directed to members of that society. In his letter dedicating the volume to William Blomfield, Director of the London Missionary Society, Doss wrote,
Allow me respectfully to dedicate the following pages to you, as a token of my affection, respect, and esteem for yourself. (Reminiscences I)

However Doss also expected some Indian readers, keen to know about the unknown parts of the world, which he had visited. Perhaps the curious comment, which follows, was a gesture to this readership. For while he assured Blomfield that, “Many an English home was thrown open to me in England and the colonies, and the greatest cordiality was shown,” he continued, “Although a member of an alien and conquered race, I was made to feel at home in every one of them” (Reminiscences I). Within his extensive text, his discussion of Australia constituted around a quarter amounting to some 56 pages.

Sullaiman Shah Mahomed was born in 1859 in the village of Dorajee in Kattyawar. He described himself as belonging to “the well-known Memon section of the Mahomedan community” (Journal of My Tours around the World 1). He had been educated at local traditional institutions. At the age of six, he had gone to school at the village mosque and thence proceeded to the “Gujera school” (Journal of My Tours around the World 1). He described his father as a trader working in Mauritius (Journal of My Tours around the World 1). He seems to have been in business abroad himself, living at one point in Rangoon and subsequently at Cape Town. He was a man of Empire, Indian born and in business in Cape Town. He was a young man, born in 1859, but had already undertaken some extensive touring.

In 1886 he had left Rangoon, where he lived at that time, and proceeded to Cape Town, Arabia, to Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem and Turkey, finishing his tour in 1887. On his second tour, he departed from Cape Town in February 1893 for Australia and New Zealand before continuing on to China, Japan, the Yosemite Valley, Salt Lake City, Chicago, Niagara Falls, New York, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Russia, Poland, Austro-Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, France, England, Bombay, Bagdad, Nineveh, Babylon, Persian and Hindustan [sic] where he returned in 1895. Thus his visit to Australia formed only a small part of his travels. Indeed in his book of some 340 pages, his discussion of Australia is limited to eleven pages.

During the course of his first tour he had gone to Arabia and made the pilgrimage to Mecca and on the title page of his book, used the title, “Hajee.” In the introduction to his book, he explained why he published an account of his travels,

My principal object in publishing these pages is to give some idea, however faint and crude, to my compatriots and particularly to my Mahomedan brethren, that beyond the narrow bounds of their home, there lies a world of joy and beauty. (Journal of My Tours around the World vii)

He was more independent than Doss, who wrote for people and an organization upon which he depended. His book Journal of My Tours around the World, 1886-1887 and 1893-1895 was published in 1895 in Bombay at printed at the Dufur Ashkra Oil Engine Press. It is not clear what was the nature of this press, but presumably it had some association with his business interests.

Doss first touched on Australian shores when he came to Tasmania, a place he knew of from his school-days, “In our younger days we knew this island by the name of Van Dieman’s Land on the map in books of geography” (Reminiscences 145). He discusses Tasman’s discovery of the island, its convict history and its geography as well as describing its industries, infrastructure and economy for his readers.

He found the approach to Hobart up the River Derwent most beautiful,

A bold hill scenery is presented to you, and you see immense hills and crags on either side, and taller and still taller hills rise behind, until the more distant ones grow fainter and eventually melt away from sight. (Reminiscences 150)

Similarly, Mahomed enthused about the beauty of Sydney harbour claiming,

The harbour is most beautiful and splendid, in its natural charms I think it is unrivalled by any other harbour in
the world [...]. It would be worth all the way to Sydney to go to see only its harbour. (Journal of My Tours around the World 73)

He enjoyed the outdoors and while in Melbourne he went to “Dandynong [sic], Upper Ferntree Gully and Gippsland” where the superintendent showed him the huge trees and the park. “I took my lunch by the side of a quiet and beautiful stream, and it was with great reluctance that I left the spot at 9 p.m. for home” (Journal of My Tours around the World 65). In the Blue Mountains, he was fascinated by the beauty of Jenolan Caves (Journal of My Tours around the World 74-76).

Doss often commented upon the beautiful and varied vegetation, both introduced and native, particularly noting plants from Bengal,

Again, the Hybiscus, or the red Jaba, and other flower plants of Bengal were to be found in almost every garden in the town. (Reminiscences 193)

Travelling from Sydney, down along the coast to Wollongong he marvelled at the scenery,

we suddenly emerged out of the forest, and came near the sea-coast. All the sea-ward slopes and ravines of this locality were like vast conservatories covered with tropical verdure and bloom. Among other species of the vegetable world, all new to me, there were numberless palms here that rose about a hundred feet. The looked so much like the Tal [...] of Bengal. (Reminiscences 198)

He was interested in the wild-life and disappointed not to see a “Tasmanian Devil,” makes a tart observation upon the settlers’ destruction of the environment,

To my disappointment the Englishman’s gun, I found, has done as much havoc [sic] on them, as his axe has done on the giant trees of the island. (Reminiscences 148)

Doss sets out to give his readers a geography lesson, conveying some facts about Tasmania’s economy,

Mount Bischoff Tin mine [...] is the largest and richest tin mine now known in the world [...]. Wool is also sent out in large quantities to supply the looms of Lancashire and Yorkshire [...]. The south-west part of the island is literally covered with orchards [...]. Tasmania may properly be called the fruit garden of the southern world. (Reminiscences 146-147)

In all these discussions of the landscape and the economy, the writing of both Doss and Mahomed is shaped by generic features of travel writing which link observation of and description of colonial landscapes to colonial authority. But in these descriptions, on occasion, another sensibility emerges. Thus as Doss admires the railways and roads in Tasmania, he shapes his comments to Indian readers, who shared his awareness that they were of a “conquered race” (Reminiscences 1) living in a conquered land,

The secret of bringing a land under one’s control is to have good roads for travelling, and the colonists have carried that into effect. These roads are all well-metalled. (Reminiscences 148)

Like the travellers’ accounts discussed by Bronowski and Milner, Doss expounds upon the wide open spaces, but once more, there is a critical note,

To form some idea of the vastness of the country thus taken possession of and colonised by the English, we have to remember, that twenty-five kingdoms of the size of Great Britain and Ireland can be carved out of it, and still there will be remainder. (Reminiscences 176)

Here the Indian reader must ponder the British domination of India.

The colonial capital cities, particularly Melbourne and Sydney, new, modern cities with a number of amenities, cities which had grown rapidly from nothing were described in generally glowing terms. The colonisers had stamped their marks upon these places, taking them from “the naked houseless savage.” Doss wrote of “marvellous Melbourne,”

Melbourne has recently celebrated her Jubilee, and what a wonderful progress she has made during the last fifty years. Perhaps there is no other city in the world which can be said to have made such progress in such a short time. In 1830 the kangaroo reigned there the undisputed lord of all or the naked houseless savage roamed in quest
of his precarious food; in 1836 there were only thirteen small cottages of the first settlers, but now on that spot stands a city, one of the largest in the British Empire, and justly entitled to be called the "Queen City of the South," as her sons proudly call her. It is full of large buildings which can vie with those of any large town in Europe, while on every side of the city there are extensive suburbs with the handsome residences and villas of her wealthy citizens. (Reminiscences 301)

Doss was taken by the amenities available to the general public, noting particularly the "The Public Library and Reading Room [...]. Admission is free to all [...]. At night the place is lit by electricity. Scores of people avail themselves of the use of these books at all hours of the day" (Reminiscences 203).

Although Mahomed believed that Sydney was "superior in many respects to Melbourne" (Journal of My Tours around the World 73), he greatly enjoyed the week he spent in Melbourne. He was very positive about the Coffee Palace where he stayed, where he writes, "I did not dine at the general table, I paid extra for dining alone, according to the observance of the Mussulman faith" (Journal of My Tours around the World 62). He was quite taken with the night life of Melbourne,

"Melbourne at night presents a grand and imposing appearance [...]."

On Saturday night, Melbourne, as is the case with large European cities, was gay and brilliant with illuminations and crowds of pleasure seekers going to theatres, concert and restaurants. I wandered about in amazement and wonder till a late hour. (Journal of My Tours around the World 62)

He too marvelled at this new great city,

"The public buildings are all on a very grand scale, testifying to the importance and wonderful expansion of the city which was but a barren waste up till 1838. (Journal of My Tours around the World 64)"

Both admired Sydney, representing it as a modern world city. Doss described how it had grown into a large city,

"It has public and mercantile buildings quite suitable to its position, some of which are of great architectural beauty. The Town Hall, the Roman Catholic and Protestant Cathedral, the University and the government buildings will do honour to any city in the world [...]. The General Post Office deserves more than a passing mention. (Reminiscences 190-191)"

Mahomed similarly was full of admiration for the harbour city,

"The city is built on hills, and looks magnificent with its public buildings. Most of the carriage roads are paved with wood; while the footpaths have a flooring of stone [...]. Its public buildings and gardens are more magnificent. (Journal of My Tours around the World 73)"

Its citizens could enjoy the open air, unlike those of Bombay,

"Although the population of Sydney is but a fourth of that of Bombay, the Government have made ample provision for open space for the benefit of the inhabitants. There are five extensive parks, covering altogether 1,185 acres of ground, serving as so many lungs of the city. Bombay with its close upon a million of population, living mostly in densely inhabited quarters must take a lesson from this. (Journal of My Tours around the World 73-74)"

The number of women in Australian cities and their apparent prominence in public struck both these Indian travellers as remarkable. Mahomed exaggerated the proportion of women in that population and claimed that in Hobart, "females are four times as many as the males" (Journal of My Tours around the World 66) and in Melbourne that women formed the majority of the population (Journal of My Tours around the World 62).

What struck me at the Post Office, a magnificent building of granite, was that most of the employees [sic] there were females, instead of males. For myself, I saw but one male in the establishment. (Journal of My Tours around the World 62)

It is curious that Doss, who had worked with a number of women missionaries, who saw themselves as working to raise Indian womanhood, seems to imply that there were too many educated women and that the Australian universities might be over-run by them. He visited the University of
Melbourne,

in the company of a lady undergraduate. The Australian Universities have, as I have already said, opened their doors to female as well as to male students. A good many young ladies have taken the B.A. and the M.A. degrees, and their number is daily on the increase. (Reminiscences 204)

Indeed Doss saw fit to deliver a little lecture about woman’s entry to the public sphere, which conveyed some anxiety about woman’s advance,

I noticed in some places women being employed as station-masters, signalmen, &c. on these railways. I saw in a station, on the Tasmanian Main Line of Railway, an elderly dame of a portly figure, holding out the little white flag on the approach of the train by which I was travelling […] In England I had seen a great deal of the Post Office work being done by women […] and I was therefore not prepared to find the softer sex pressed into the railway service of the colony, where labour is dear. With the march of civilization and the increase of the requirements of man, things are changing even in the remotest corners of the world and among people of stereotyped conservativeness; but I hope that the day will not come, when in India woman will in this manner push her way to the forefront of business life, and displace men, and be his rival in the great competition of winning bread. (Reminiscences 148-149)

In Australia, Doss stayed with supporters of the London Missionary Society. Indeed he moved around Australia, being welcomed by members of various churches. As an envoy of the London Missionary Society, he was among friends; of his arrival at Sydney he wrote, “I was soon in the midst of kind friends, from whom I received a very hearty welcome, although I had never seen any of them before” (Reminiscences 174).

Although Mahomed came on a private visit and knew almost no-one in Australia, he found the colonists that he met were welcoming. The people of Victoria,

were very kind and polite to me, a stranger among them. The railway servants have orders to show special attention to tourists. But their courtesy and desire to oblige proceeded from the heart. (Journal of My Tours around the World 65)

However, despite being received in a warm and helpful manner in Australia, both Doss and Mahomed were quite aware of the racialised hierarchies operating within empire, which could cast them as members of an inferior race. As noted earlier, Doss located himself as “a member of an alien and conquered race” (Reminiscences I).

Sullaiman Shah Mahomed did not display his difference in an obvious manner, writing, “I was attired as was my wont when travelling, in European dress” (Journal of My Tours around the World 96). A photograph of him in the front of book shows him wearing a European style jacket, waistcoat and trousers with a black fez. Doss, who wore Indian clothing, was aware that he was noticed as being different by passers-by throughout his long tour. He wrote,

I need not mention that I was noticed by almost everyone on streets. My dark complexion and my chupkah which I retained throughout the whole of my travels […] attracted everyone’s notice. They looked at me and it was quite natural for them to do so. (Reminiscences 37)

At the Queen’s Birthday celebration in Sydney May 1888, he tried to imagine how he was being viewed by other spectators:

While looking at the review of troops I was none the less viewed by such of the spectators as I came across. The peculiarity of my dress and the darkness of my complexion naturally attracted their notice and I wonder what they thought of me. Perhaps they took me for one of the aborigines metamorphosed or a South Sea Islander visiting their city. (Reminiscences 194)

Both knew that the friendliness they had met might be replaced by hostility, if they planned to stay in Australia. Their visits coincided with popular discussion of and agitation against “Asian” immigration to the Australian colonies. While they might be classified as inferior they also made use of the racialised hierarchical categories of imperialism to discuss peoples they encountered. As Burton notes,
For Indian travellers as for Britons of many classes, ranking people of colour was a way of displaying not just knowledge of colonial hierarchies, but a certain claim to civilization on the basis of distinction [...]. (137)

Both used the racialised hierarchies of nineteenth-century Social Darwinism. Of the Maori peoples of New Zealand, Mahomed declared, "They are better than the aborigines of Australia" (Journal of My Tours around the World 66). His account is replete with all the themes of imperialist and anthropological discourses. While he did not discuss Australian Indigenous peoples directly, he placed them upon an evolutionary hierarchy when contemplating Maori people on his New Zealand sojourn.

The Maoris are interesting people. They are copper-coloured and grow their hair from one and a half to two feet in length. Their hair is not curly or knotted like that of the Negroes or the Somalis, but straight and smooth. They are naturally intelligent, and the advanced among them have adopted the dress, the habits and even the religion of the Christians. They are much better looking than the aborigines of Australia. Their noses are flat, indeed but not to such a degree as those of their brethren on the mainland. The custom of the tattoo marking is dying out amongst them. They have vastly improved within the space of but half a century, by contact with European civilisation. They were a race of cannibals before. (Journal of My Tours around the World 67)

A visit to the Melbourne museum saw him positioning himself, once more, as a spectator of the "primitive," within which, in this example, he seemed to include "the Hindoos,"

The museum contains a most interesting collection of images of the aborigines, such as the Fijis [sic] and the Maoris, their clothes and utensils, their tools of labour and weapons of war. Their idols of wood bear a remarkable resemblance to the idols of the Hindoos. The appearance of the primitive, as shown here, was most ugly, their nub noses contributing not a little to their ill-favoured look. (Journal of My Tours around the World 64)

When he met some Indian traders in Hobart he was not very impressed with them, echoing some local prejudices,

There are here about two dozen Indians, mostly Bengal Mahomedans, who go about the city, selling articles as pedlers and hawkers. I am sorry that they are held—and not quite without reason—in very low esteem by the inhabitants. I found them very filthy in their habits. (Journal of My Tours around the World 66)

However as he proceeded further in Australia, he became more critical of the settlers' views, and more supportive of "Asiatics" as they faced "stringent regulations [which had] recently been passed against their further encroachments" (Journal of My Tours around the World 62):

In Sidney [sic] I met an Indian, who informed me that twenty Bengalees were going about as hawkers in various sorts of fancy and embroidery work. When I was there, a proposal, made to levy a license fee from them, had alarmed them considerably, because the poor fellows are not reported to be making more than a bare living by their trade. I also saw some Sindhis and Kashmiris. They deal in fancy goods on a small scale. These traders appeared to be quite a harmless lot, working hard for their daily bread. They are perfectly innocent of English and do not know how very black they are painted by the jealousy and prejudice of writers in the Australian journals. (Journal of My Tours around the World 78)

Their experiences must have reminded him of his own experiences in South Africa, at the end of his book he made mention of these,

The poor Indians are looked down upon by the white man, and are loaded with disabilities. The insults and injustices to which they are subjected are bitter and galling. (Journal of My Tours around the World 331)

Initially, he was quite critical of the Chinese,

The Chinese settlers are very filthy in their habits. A score of them live in one small, dirty, room, huddled and crowded together. Opium is their only luxury. (Journal of My Tours around the World 77)

He repeated settler criticisms of them and notes that "America, too, is infested with representatives of the Yellow Race" (Journal of My Tours around the World 77). However after visiting China, later in his tour, he came to understand that the poor Chinese in the Australian colonies were not representative of all Chinese,

I had at first a low opinion of the Chinese, but it was modified after I had an opportunity of a closer acquaintance.
I have referred to the filthy habits of the Chinese in the Australian and other colonial states, but with the exception of the lower classes the Chinese are a polite and more or less cleanly race of men. (Journal of My Tours around the World 85)

Doss clearly located himself as an “Aryan,” and when addressing audiences in Australia (The South Australian Register 26 June 1888) would link the Indians and the British as members of the “great Aryan family” (3) At times, Doss does represent the Chinese as his inferiors. He repeated the Australian workers’ view of the Chinese workers as undercutting their wages and amounting to “a formidable rival.” He wrote of the Chinese arousing the “jealousy” of the “English Australian,” who determines to bar him from “the land of his adoption.” Here the reader is reminded that Australia is not really the home of the white Australians, but merely one that has been taken over by them as their—“favourite preserves.” The picture that emerges is one of these Australian workers jealously wanting to keep Australia for themselves. In order to do this, they treat the Chinese with “cruel unkindness” and indeed the Chinese immigrants are threatened by mob violence and illegal behaviour. Doss was in Sydney in 1888 and witnessed the events, when the Afghan attempted to land a number of Chinese in the face of vehement local opposition.

The people held monster meetings to adopt measures for preventing these Chinese inroads. A very crowded and excited meeting was held in the Town Hall, under the presidency of the Mayor of Sydney, and that gentleman had the weakness to yield to the populace, and was led to walk at their head to the house of the Premier of the colony, in order to present a petition to government for taking effective measures at once to send these Chinese away. (Reminiscences 196)

Doss’s ambivalence in relation to racial categories of the time emerge in his discussion of Australian Indigenous people. As Mahomed does, he adopts the position of the spectator of the “primitive”: like many of his hosts, he saw Indigenous people as savage and inferior, having nothing in common with him. Perusing a booklet, entitled Album of the Kings and Queens of Victoria he comments in a sarcastic tone upon the portraits of some Aboriginal people of Victoria.

What beautiful specimens of royalty they were [. . .]. Every one of them had a dark and clumsy appearance, as savages may be expected to have, and whether king or queen, each had a native Boomerang, club or long stick in hand the ensign of royalty, which took the place of the sword or sceptre of their more civilized brethren. (Reminiscences 186)

However when he read of the trial of a “native outlaw,” he chose to represent at length, the speech which the accused delivered to the court. He wrote,

The view which a native takes of the intrusion of his father-land by the English colonists, and his attitudes towards him therefore, may be very well imagined from the following speech made by a notorious native outlaw. Before a high law officer of the crown, in defence of his own conduct. “Why do you white people,” said he, “come in ships to our country and shoot down poor black fellows who do not understand you? You listen to me! The wild black fellows do not understand your laws.” (Reminiscences 187)

At the end of the speech, Doss wrote, “The speech speaks for itself” (Reminiscences 187). So while he did not directly write of the cruelty, he allowed the Indigenous man to speak of what his people had suffered under colonialism. Doss continued and even as he sought to smooth over the great disruption which had appeared in the text, and to remind readers of the good work that the missionaries were doing with the Aboriginal people, there is the reminder that Australia was a conquered land.

As soon as the black man was dispossessed, and he ceased to be dangerous, the heart of the white man relented towards him, and he has commenced to look after the remnants of the tribes. Philanthropists, both lay and clerical, have found liberal support from the state and from individuals, to carry out their good work among them. (Reminiscences 186-187)

This discussion of some late nineteenth century Indian travel writing about Australia offers fresh
perspectives upon Australia. At a time when Australians, like most other white peoples, assumed the right to survey the world and to comment upon and categorise its peoples, here we see the lens turned upon the Australian colonies and colonists, by those who might be termed members of an “alien and conquered race.” While these writers discourse in a quite conventional manner on the wonders of new landscapes and growing cities, their texts are at times ambivalent. As the writers negotiate their own shifting positioning within imperial racial hierarchies, a critique of British imperialism and the racial policies of White Australia emerges in the text.

Endnotes

1 For further information on this pamphlet and the extensive research into Chinese in Nineteenth and early Twentieth century Australia, see the Chinese Heritage of Australian Federation project at http://www.chaf.lib.larrobe.edu.au/.

2 Presumably this is now the town of Dhoraji on the Kathiawar Peninsula, on the Arabian Sea, south-west of Ahmadabad, Gujarat.

Works Cited

“London Missionary Society.” The South Australian Register 26 June 1888: 3.


—. “This Applicant does not Appear to be a Desirable Character”: Mohan Singh Negotiates the Immigration Restriction Act.” Presentation. Centre for Cross Cultural Research, ANU. 21 September 2006.


Austral-Asian Dialogues

Convicts, Call Centres and Cochin Kangaroos: South Asian Globalising of the Australian Imagination

Paul Sharrad

Although Australia until recent times was known for its White Australia Policy and the dominance of a monolingual Anglo-Celtic population, various people have shown how its origins—not forgetting for one moment the originary presence of an indigenous people—were from the start of colonisation, multicultural. Alison Brinowski is perhaps the most celebrated example of scholars who have added to this reinspection of history and identity by showing how many contacts there have been (actual and literary, hostile and friendly) between Australia and Asia. Most attention in this context has until recently been given to China and Japan, if only because their peoples feature in the national mythology of Australia (the Gold Rushes and World War II). There is another region, however, with which Australia has had many connections from the beginnings of its colonial and national existence. That is India.

Australia's links with India came home to me when reading a fascinating book, The Artificial Horizon (2003), about the exploration and white settlement of the Blue Mountains. Turning the first page of the Introduction, I found a sub-heading: "The View from Jellore." It turned out to refer to an illustration in the journals of explorer Thomas Mitchell who camped at Mt Jellore in 1828, as the surveyor-general of New South Wales. His name for the mountain is actually a twisted version of the Gundungurra name provided by an Aboriginal guide—something Mitchell later corrected as more like "Geloro" (Thomas 46). The way in which Mitchell initially transforms this word, however, is interesting. Of course, many white arrivals to the new land garbled local names (when they did not simply erase them in favour of "Tara" or "Glen Something" or "Avon Something else"). But what was there operating on Mitchell's unconscious to cause him instinctively to reproduce an Aboriginal word as though it were a town in India?

What this casual transliteration suggests is that, just as Bernard Smith (1960) shows how white Australian painters saw the land through filters of visual and artistic habit acquired in Europe, so too, there may well have been a British habit of thought arising from two hundred years of prior imperialist experience by which new parts of the globe were seen in South Asian terms. This idea was quickly reinforced when the same book on the Blue Mountains several pages later reproduced some frames from an educational comic strip of 1958. Governor Lachlan Macquarie, of New South Wales, is fretting over the need for more farmland, noting crossly, "The bread we eat comes from India." (Thomas 44)

India has a long history of connections to Australia. For a start, long before Captain Cook set foot on southern shores, cloth from “the Indies” had traded its way from Gujarat and the Coromandel down through the Indonesian archipelago to be traded with Aborigines by Makassar seamen negotiating seasonal camps to collect trepang, fish and pearl. So from before its beginnings as a European outpost of Empire and then white commonwealth of states, Australia was part of a cultural
diaspora and economic globalising.

Mitchell was, like so many colonial officials, a military man. The Imperial machine operated on a globalising movement of labour in which military travel played a significant role. Australia’s literary history is part of this extended imperial system. John Lang published *Too Clever by Half; Or, The Harroways* in 1853. This seems to be the first novel by someone born in Australia, but it failed to be accepted within an antipodean literary history for a long time because it has no bush or sheep; rather it described the social life of colonial Calcutta and military camp life in the satiric tones of a Restoration play, since Lang was stationed there as part of the Empire’s mobile labour force—in his case as a lawyer (see Hosking 2003). Later, of course, every would-be poet in Australia churned out imitations of Rudyard Kipling’s barrack room ballads with gum trees thrown in.

Men like Mitchell and Lang, from the 1820s on, were retired to land grants in Tasmania and later in other parts of Australia. It was they who brought with them the verandahs of the Raj that became part of Australian architecture and familiarity with India brought about the misrecognition of a marsupial that is now called a bandicoot. Towns and pastoral properties carry Indian names (like Lucknow) redolent of the Mutiny era and there is in the West a Seringapatam Reef, preserving the memory of Tipu Sultan—also known as the Tiger of Mysore, who ruled from his capital Seringapatam—and a young Wellesley via the name of the ship that foundered there.

When I was a boy living on the rural edge of Adelaide, where suntanned sheep farmers would ride to hounds in the blazing summer heat and the absent Queen took our salute in the school playground every Friday, my loving parents would protect me from sunburn, heatstroke (and as we now know, skin cancer) as I trudged from home to class and back by forcing on my unwilling head a helmet of grey canvas and glue-smelling cork lining. It was a sola topi straight out of the Raj and readily available in school outfitters everywhere in Australia of the 1950s. It is appropriate, then (more so, given the numbers of my extended family now in the teaching profession), that one of the two brothers who brought my father’s family line to the Antipodes arrived in 1848 on the sailing vessel, the “Baboo.” The other brother is persistently rumoured to have been contracted by Sir Thomas Elder to go to what was then greater India and bring back some “Afghans” and their camels with which outback cattle stations could be reliably supplied. This came about in 1866 and the camels (with their Afghan attendants) became an important factor in the development of the northern area of South Australia.

Personal and imaginative connections between Indian and Australia obviously dwindled under the closing down of the latter’s contacts over time until they were mainly with the “Mother Country” and Europe. For India, contacts were severely restricted by the already mentioned White Australia Policy, which lasted from 1901 to 1972, by India’s break with Britain in 1947, and by anglophile Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Gordon Menzies’ suspicion of India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s left-leaning non-alignment ideals (Bronowski, 2003; 94-95). Nonetheless, some links remained. In fact, the White Australia Policy had its inspiration in laws passed in Natal to control the influx of “coolie labour,” and while it did exclude for many years anyone of non-European appearance, it came too late to affect a small settlement by Punjabis dating back at least to the 1850s, and it had no effect on Australian overseas working with Indian indentured labour on Fiji’s sugar plantations. These historical connections are reflected in occasional literary works such as the autobiographical novel *The Pea Pickers* (1942) by Eve Langley and the frank memoir of Fiji canefields, *Tum Tum North East at the Tombstone* (1970) by Walter Gill.

Many of the other literary links between Australia and India are by now familiar, although they still have not always received the amount of attention they may deserve. They range chronologically from the period pieces of Ethel Anderson from her time as officer’s wife in
1920’s cantonments of northern India, through the stories, Time of the Peacock (1965), of Mena Abdullah about a cross-communal Punjabi family working a sheep farm in New South Wales to the novel Across the Sea Wall (1965) by Tasmanian-born novelist Christopher Koch. Koch was a forerunner of the tourist trail that took a host of Australians through India en route to Europe or just through India, and his book has been criticised for being of its time: an account of culture shock amongst provincial white settlers raised on Beatrix Potter, William Earl Johns’ Biggles and Kipling. The last, induces a false sense of familiarity and fellow colonial spirit in Koch’s callow Australian narrator, who is thereby all the more traumatised when his dreams of both the East and Europe are simultaneously shattered by close encounters with representatives of both. Janette Turner Hospital records her time with an anthropologist husband in Kerala in a colourful romance adventure, The Ivory Swing (1982).

There are less obvious connections as well. I have set forth elsewhere the evidence of Murray Bail’s debt to his couple of years in Bombay where he worked in advertising. Colin Johnson, better known for his writings under the Aboriginal guise of Mudrooroo, has a set of poems based on his trips to India where he did some of his studies towards becoming a Buddhist, and he incorporated Indian symbolism into his epic journey poem Dalawam (1988). By a long circuitous route, he now lives in Nepal. Vicki Viridikas, first known as a young tyro of the hippie-era poetry scene in Australia, escaped to India and never really made it back from there. But her collection India Ink (1982) provides a deadpan set of snapshots of a traveller’s experience of the foreign.

In more recent times, with the removal of one set of immigration restrictions (we won’t talk about the detention centres for refugees!), the onset of university exchanges and writers’ programmes, and the growing circuit of expatriate South Asians from all points of the compass, Australian visits to India are once again on the rise (and vice versa). Thus, Adib Khan, originally from Bangladesh and for many years from Victoria, sets his third novel in Delhi, The Storyteller (2000). Inez Barayam, produces Neem Dreams (2003), and only last year a novel, by Shalini Akhill, clearly owing much to Meena Syal’s ethnic comedies in the UK, has emerged from the Indo-Fijian community in Melbourne—somewhat predictably titled The Bollywood Beauty (2005).

These connections have been steadily building towards a new component of Australian literary multiculturalism that is redefining the “Asian” in our hyphenated “Asian-Australian” label away from East and Southeast Asian. What I want to look at for a moment is the reverse: Indian images of an Australian connection.

If we stretch the category of “India” to include colonial writing, then we can find interesting samples of an imperial pecking order of places to work in. The planning for a hill station settlement in Ootacamund, for example, urged yeoman farmers from Scotland to try their fortunes in South India’s uplands rather than going to Australia where they would almost certainly bankrupt themselves in ungenial conditions (Grigg 459). B. M. Croker, somewhere around 1900, looks back fondly to life In Old Madras. Here we find a colonial romance of leisured soldiers and society riding to hounds and seeking fortunes while dodging gossip and female husband seekers. A young British heir to a country estate comes to India looking for his long-lost uncle. In the process, he saves the marriage of a cowardly bigamist, supposedly an owner of a coffee plantation, but actually living with his mixed-race family in hiding for part of the year and married to an Irish landowner for the rest. He thanks his benefactor go-between, adding that “If I’d followed my own instinct, I believe I’d have thrown up the sponge, and cut and run, to Australia” (In Old Madras 197). Earlier, the young hero returns to Madras, relieved not to be subjected to its social whirl because most of his friends are “in the Hills, or gone home, or to Australia” (In Old Madras 178). It is also mentioned several times and favourably, that people are riding “walers”—horses bred especially for the Indian trade in New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia.
So further South is seen as both a safe place to go for relief from the heat (South Africa being the other favoured venue), and as a last-resort bolthole for those who can’t make it in India. This split reputation seems to continue into later writing by Indian nationals.

Raj Kamal Jha, in his novel, *The Blue Bedspread* (2000), writes:

> My sister is four years older than me [. . .]. Her teacher is Mr Peter D’Souza, mine is Miss Constance Lopez. Miss Lopez’s son died in a shipwreck near Australia. He had gone there on a vacation with his friends and the ship sank. I have read about Australia, the Great Barrier Reef, the Flying Doctor, I like Miss Lopez a lot. (36)

and later

> The TV was black and white, they kept showing an Australian movie, late in the night, where the actress, white, wore a velvet gown, black, and she looked through the window at a garden covered with snow, there was a black coffin in the middle of the garden, all around its four edges, were black stones. (195)

This seems to suggest an utmost remoteness, a place not even exotic, just surreally suspended and distant, and marking the boundary of human existence, like a symbol from an arcane rite. It is of interest from an Australian point of view because it does not reproduce the image Australians tend to have of their modern film production, which, until the very recent co-productions with Hollywood companies—such as *Mission Impossible* (1996) and *The Matrix* (1999)—were landscape period dramas, such as *Gallipoli* (1981), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978) and—in comic mode—*Crocodile Dundee* (1986) and *The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert* (1994).

Mahasweta Devi, in her story “The Hunt” (1995) picks up on one of the apparently common professions for Australians in India outside of Imperial service when she depicts her wild woman of the hills, Mary Oraon, as the offspring of a local woman and the son of an Australian plantation owner. One of Ethel Anderson’s artist friends in real life married a tea planter from around Ooty, and much later Arundhati Roy has the drunken Bengali tea plantation clerk who fathers her protagonist twins in *The God of Small Things* (1997) find work in Calcutta and then migrate to Australia. She also provides a rather unflattering portrait of Miss Mitten, a narrow-minded missionary from Tasmania who disapproves of the twins’ ability to read backwards.

In *The Trotter Nama* (1990), his epic fabulised history of Anglo-Indians, I. Allan Sealy comments on the rush to emigrate by this community as Independence looms on the sub-continent:

> [. . .] the white Belle of Bangalore gathered up her daughters and left for England.

Next to go was half the Olympic hockey team; only they went the other way, Down Under. The result was that India’s hockey supremacy was lost while Australia would become a team to reckon with. Australia took Trotters by the thousand, provided they were not less than seventy-five percent white. Norwithstanding the percentage, Perth was the beginning of the end of the White Australia Policy. (503)

Perhaps in keeping with the doubleness of the Anglo-Indian identity, Australia here offers its own dual image: a haven of improved prospects and a second-best option compared to Britain. Still more recently, Bharati Mukherjee echoes the Anglo-Indian migration post-Independence and under the radar of a slowly relaxing Australian immigration policy. Mukherjee’s plot turns on whether an Indian Christian doctor, brother of the schoolyard best friend of a Bengali Hindu, had a love-child with this *bhadrilok* aspirant to a film career. Her friend, Poppy, marries an Australian and goes to live in Sydney (*Desirable Daughters* 235). Again, there is the intimation that this is the best she could hope for—that America would have been much more acceptable—though Mukherjee’s US does not seem to make its Indian immigrants particularly contented either.

A singular positive mention of the Antipodes comes about, unexpectedly, as the result of sporting interests. In *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1992), Amit Chaudhuri depicts his narrator’s uncle listening
to test matches with Australia on the radio. India does the honourable thing and loses; how could a nation founded on Gandhi ever win, asks the uncle rhetorically (A Strange and Sublime Address 73-74).

Partly through the sporting contacts and Steve Waugh’s sponsoring of children’s refuges in Calcutta and his help to raise funds for a leper children’s colony called “Udayan,” Australians continue to have an image of India as a land of poverty in need of “First World” assistance. The Indian literary view is an instructive counter to this lingering colonial outlook. It is also a disturbing one, since it brings out the import for white Australians of Homi Bhabha’s (1994) phrase “not quite/not white” (89), by suggesting that these southern colonials are somehow inauthentic imitations of elsewhere, ranked lower than the colonial mimics in India. In the Indian-Australian connection there is also an interesting case of one “periphery” engaging with another without directing traffic through the old centre of imperial power: globalised networks become more complexly interactive, though they carry the ghosts of former systems.

Nowadays, when Optus (the second largest telecommunications company in Australia) tries to sell me some new communications technology, the person calling lives in Delhi, and a Gujarat mining company has revitalised disused coal-mines not far from where I live. Two thirds of the local doctors are from India and have been here now for half a century. But while Australians are beginning to go to Tamil Nadu for cheap and reliable surgery, the popular prejudice about Third World skills resurfaces quickly at any hint of scandal. To attract doctors to country hospitals, medicos have been encouraged to migrate from abroad. In Bundaberg, Queensland, a Dr Jayant Patel, resident in the US, attained the unenviable nickname of “Doctor Death” for a series of apparent procedural bungles. This caused a huge controversy and a massive public panic about the credentials of immigrant professionals. The global village remains in many respects divided by old colonial attitudes.

If we return to considering writers in Australia, but specifically those of South Asian extraction, we can detect elements of both the recycling of orientalist discourse through internalised sections of the national imaginaries of both Australia and India and a lively critique of them from a self-aware, ambiguous diasporic viewpoint. There have been, of course, significant literary figures from Sri Lanka such as Yasmine Gooneratne, Chitra Fernando and Ernest MacIntyre, along with Adib Khan’s early writing, taking potshots at Australian life. Two people of a different generation, raised in Australia from infancy rather than arriving here as adults, who have had some impact on the literary scene are Christopher Cyrill and Suneeeta Peres da Costa.

Samir Dayal (1996) argues for a rethinking beyond diaspora as a tug-of-war between “the host [and] the home country” (46). For the second-generation migrant, the host country is the home and the home country, when family ties or curiosity compel visits, turns out to be the host country that is/ was also somehow home but which frequently is not experienced as homely. It is only a particular kind of globe-trotting professional class that can maintain both nation spaces as home, and then it is not always the nation, but the regional or very local site that is thought of in this way. So diasporic consciousness is in a real sense “transnational”—spanning, but also disregarding the nation spaces of both ends of the migratory shuttle. Dayal posits the nature of such a diasporic double consciousness in negative terms: not as “both/and” so much as “neither this/ nor yet that” (47). This is akin to Uma Parameswaran’s (1987) poetic figuration of Indo-Canadian migrancy as the suspended animation/death of Trishanku. What we see in Cyrill and da Costa—two younger-generation offspring of migrants—is an attempt to rework diasporic awareness along Dayal’s lines.

As her name suggests, Suneeeta Peres da Costa’s family originates in Goa. In her novel Homework (1999), she creates a composite alter ego in the sensitive, eager-to-please but fallible Mina Pereira and her precociously academic sister Deepa, both scandalised by their younger sister Shanti, who is entirely devoted to physical exercise. The Pereiras have migrated following India’s take-over of Goa. Mina’s
father has the paradoxical task of working for the Department of Immigration, vetting Cambodians and Vietnamese refugees. He also prints a small exile magazine in support of Goan liberation, cheers at Mrs. Gandhi’s death and in Canberra stages a sad but humorous one-man protest against the annexation of his original home to the total incomprehension of the general populace (Homework 154-156, 170). His wife finds work as a nurse in palliative care, but (in keeping with findings that refugee women frequently suffer more than men) goes slowly mad under the stress of starting a new life (see Ferguson and Pittaway 1999). Her obsessive identification with birds, both for their migratory powers and their nest building, drives her husband to despair and the girls to self-help survivalism. The homework of the book’s title, refers variably to the draining effort of learning how to fit in to a new country, the work required to make and maintain a home (a particular fetish in suburban nuclear-family Australia), and the homework the girls are given at school to indoctrinate a traditional Anglo vision of Australian history and identity.

Global commodification of identity is a visible theme in the novel: Mina gets into trouble for stealing a friend’s tourist souvenir can of California sunshine to cheer her mother up (Homework 17); Deepa is seen to ridicule images of Australian stoic suffering by her over-enthusiastic participation in interactive convict exhibits at a theme park visited by Japanese tourists (Homework 168); the house is full of icons of Euro-Australian domesticity: Vegemite, meat pies, Streets’ ice-cream. There is a clear sense that the family tries to buy its way into Australian life by consuming all the normative products. However, the text is also full of globalised signs (European literature, American cartoons, Rubik’s cubes and Beatles tunes) and any easy access to singular identity is disturbed by Mrs Pereira, who stocks emergency supplies against some imagined disaster and desperately clings to “home” items of cooking: coriander, pilau and pakoras.

If under a globalising consumerism “difference is effaced where it seems to be celebrated” (Dayal 50), as in the homogenising of ethnic cultures under the banner of “world music,” or the clash of colours under the Bennetton label, a writer like Da Costa makes us aware of consumer labels and how they are produced as signs of identity within a supermarket economy. In so doing, she points to the intersection between global consumerism and national belonging, pointing to real difference through the paradoxical, otherwise empty signifiers of product names. WD40, an anti-rust lubricant, becomes a metaphor for Australia’s suburban ethos of self-help embodied in the home handyman at the same time that Vegemite is gutted of its national iconic force by being presented on a fictive shelf alongside a swag of other products supposedly offering belonging and comfort to all, but failing dismally to satisfy the visible minorities of predominantly Euro-Australian society.

Homework has been criticised for its overwrought language, and for its somewhat superfluous gesture to magic realism in the snail-like “feelers” that protrude from Mina’s head. These operate as an embarrassing indicator of her emotional state (symbolising the hyper-sensitivity of both the migrant and the girl on the brink of adolescence) until they wither and drop off as she enters maturity and finds release from the anxieties of her parents. There is perhaps a mix-up in that the language is sometimes more appropriate to the bookish Deepa, but it does carry the sense of the surreal reality of migrant experience, the painful sensitivity of someone trying to fit in to a new society without knowing all the rules. Ivor Indyk (1999) defends the book against criticisms of its style along these lines:

This kind of associative method seems to me a perfectly appropriate way to tell a story set in an Australian suburb, where people come from all over the place, and nurse all sorts of private histories and private obsessions. Beneath the endless elaboration there is a deeper anxiety, that the mix of realities may not hold, or that the individuals who exist at the intersection of these different realities, so far from being enriched by them all, may instead feel they don’t belong to any. That’s why the fear of madness (embodied in Mina’s mother), and the fear of exclusion (Mina’s own sense of anomie), are central to the novel, and why some of its most powerful images—
of sunshine, the sea monkeys, the empty eggs—are elaborations of nothingness. (39)

R. Radhakrishnan (2000) speaks of the “exhilarating anomic” of living between deterritorialization and reterritorialization, but quickly adds that such a celebration of transitional hybridity ignores the pain and absolutism that can also characterise diasporic experience. Along with Slavoj Žižek, he looks for a means of empowering the hybrid diasporic as symptom that will also “transform the body politic where it resides as symptom,” and sees it as a “tactics of resisting representation from within the field of representation.” Hybridity in itself is taken over by the media to the point of becoming a banal part of everyday life. What happens in Homework is precisely the staging of consumerised hybrid identity as a global truism against the alienation of diasporic betweenness (we see Meena against a backdrop of refugees from Nazi death camps, from Cambodia, from Goa, so that the novel works to historicise and politicise the concept in all its agonistic drive).

If Rosemary Marangoly George’s (1996) model of diasporic Indian writing is valid, then Homework is more part of “migrant” literature, since it does not foreground ties to South Asia or show the makings of a supportive diasporic Indian community (182). For the children of this isolated Goan family, there is little looking back, and potential community is a multicultural mix of Jews, South East Asians, Japanese tourists and the barbarian offspring of Anglo Australians. Ties are loose and fragile, and society is a surface of consumerism. The mother tries to fly away from it, and the father tries to dig down to escape, but this brings catastrophe and the girls are liberated into a brighter but bare present. Mina will survive because she has at this point lost her sensitivity, but she is not uncritical of the world she inhabits. The book uses the representations of the Australian national field of power-knowledge to resist and expose that very field; it challenges depth by showing up the shallowness of its representations, but also finds a certain delight in the potential homeliness of those superficial symbols.

In this, Da Costa—who after all had her book signed up in New York and published in London and Sydney (see Baker 1999)—echoes someone from an older generation who has not left India. Nayantara Sahgal (2001) asserts that there is nothing wrong with a globalisation that offers liberating change and prosperity, though there is something to be concerned about in the “fundamentalist” universalism of market-driven monoculture (Sahgal 6, 8). But as a specific instance of diasporic South Asian, Da Costa does not exactly inhabit the kind of cosmopolitan middle road Sahgal can envision from her national base; rather, she enacts what Samir Dayal terms a “catastrophic” display of ironic doubling that troubles boundaries between here and there as well as between modernity and postmodernity (47, 55). The postcolonial is seen to inhabit both but not in any comfortably harmonising way.

If diasporic double consciousness interrupts the Eurocentric or neo-colonial manipulation of the machinery of representation, it also ironizes the myths and images which the home country presents to itself. (Dayal 56)

Thus, Homework exposes the fabrications of Australianness as exclusively Anglo-Celtic, but also indirectly ironizes the usurping of a tiny colonial outpost by a large ex-colony in the name of national liberation.


Stranded in the country of his birth (Australia) and exiled from that of his parents (India), the writer dreams of the life he might have lived and reimagines a culture that he could only experience at second hand. (399)

By contrast, his first book, The Ganges and its Tributaries (1993) is described by Australian reviewer Sophie Masson (1993) in a more up-beat mood:

This is not a novel of migrant angst or inter-generational conflict; nor is it about a clash of cultures. There has already been so much mixing of cultures in Christopher’s family that a bit more here or there is not a problem. (23)

Even the narrator’s parents, “neither pine for nor reject India”, and sponsor a large number of relatives
to join them in the South. To this extent, it is a more typically diasporic novel than Da Costa’s, and is characterised by signs of communal identity, the now clichéd icons of food being a point of criticism for some commentators such as Annamarie Jagose (1993: 776).

It is true that Cyrill’s narrator lives part of his life through second-hand stories of the India of his parents because they seem more colourful than his immediate world. There is nothing particularly remarkable here in that it is a phenomenon common to many Australians (other than Aborigines), Anglo settlers over generations living partly in an imaginary world of knights, bandits and Dickensian coaches if not also family tales of hardship or lost splendour “back home,” always more dramatic than the drab here and now. There is a Gnostic drive in both of Cyrill’s books towards signs, patterns and talismans that promise a redeeming order to the postcolonial split consciousness—a magic spell such as Christopher Koch identified as infecting the minds of 50s British Australia. Sunjitha and Ramachandra (2003) note the Trinity and mandala motifs in The Ganges and its Tributaries (425-427) and Cyrill (1998) himself talks about the pattern of four in Hymns for the Drowning and his “constant references to lineage, inheritance” that they may help realise (653-655).

It is interesting that Cyrill, having “returned” to India in 1994, creates not a realistic fiction, but a dreaming image of some exotic hybrid Xanadu made out of artworks, literary allusions and references to pre-modern Hindu culture (Manu, a Blue God and Ganesh, for example). Before he makes the journey, his real home is (like Meena Pereira’s) registered in The Ganges and its Tributaries in all the banal detail of the suburban everyday and India features through transplanted rituals and maps. The consciousness is global and realist rather than local and surreal-modernist, although a parodic comic tone runs through both books and reflects the ambiguous identities of the author/narrator, tending towards a “postmodern” self-awareness and perhaps solipsism in Hymns. This in fact may have little to do with a hyphenated identity so much as the influence of Cyrill’s mentor Gerald Murmane; in fact, Cyrill pointedly distances himself from the kind of reading often applied to “migrant” or “hyphenated” writing by declaring his distancing devices in The Ganges and its Tributaries and stating, “Experience organised and structured and reinterpreted is artifice. Autobiography does not exist” (Interview, 1993: 24; 1998: 654).

The global is clearly signified in Christopher Cyrill’s The Ganges and its Tributaries by the photo on his novel’s cover: two women in saris and sunglasses standing beneath a large concrete globe labelled in Devanagiri script and featuring a map of Australia. In the cover design, the southern continent is picked out in gold and rayed like a halo above the taller woman’s head. As we discover (on page 41), the woman beantified by Antipodean locality is the narrator’s mother, standing outside a Calcutta office block. Her son, another Christopher, imagines himself straddling the oceans between India and Australia like a Christ-bearing colossus (The Ganges and its Tributaries 43), though his quotidian world is scaled down to cricket and teenage concerns.

The book is written in the drab factuality of a boy’s diary: “In 1974 my father started work at General Motors Holden in Fisherman’s Bend” (The Ganges and its Tributaries 23), and loaded with domestic details of food and life on new housing estates at the fringes of Melbourne. This typical, mundanely local narrative, worthy of the acid pen of Patrick White, is perhaps deliberately “ordinary” to show how typical of Australia’s general migrant experience is the story of the particular and usually unrecorded Anglo-Indian community: we see Christopher’s father sponsoring a series of family members, large “pot-luck” parties, tales of “home,” sport (The Ganges and its Tributaries 124), ethnic speech habits (The Ganges and its Tributaries 112), family albums—the sorts of motifs found in Greek and Italian and, later, Chinese-Australian narratives of an unsettled settling in. The repetitive insistence on dates and exact addresses—8 Cararas Street, Waverley Gardens, Dandenong, St Kilda, the corner of Pitman Street and Dyx Crescent (The Ganges and its Tributaries
suggests not only the unstable newness of housing estates still under construction, but the sense of fixing on specificities of location to compensate for fluidities of movement, physical and mental, that have been shared by white settler and brown migrant alike. Against this anchoring in material local reality, there is a mental awareness of the global, not only as second-hand memories of India, but as a bookish consciousness of the heavens and the sweep of human history. The Bible, Jewish custom, Siva, Dante, Nat King Cole, Columbus, swimming the English Channel, Mozart, Omar Khayyam, Delacroix, the Crimean War, and Johannes Keppler all get a mention in the otherwise closely contained Anglo-Indian community of outer Melbourne.

Where the book departs from most social realist novels of migration, is in the drive to imagine something less tangible: to set forth possible connections across space and time within a globalised world of symbol and dream. An example is when work at the Metropolitan Transport Authority demands a thorough knowledge of tram routes around Melbourne and this mind-map transmutes into a mental palimpsest of global exploration and fanciful imaginings of distant lands (The Ganges and its Tributaries 74-75). This works best in the context of the narrator trying to discover the elusive nature of his connection to an India he personally has never known (The Ganges and its Tributaries 46), but often the details in this aspect of the book seem random and gratuitous—springing self-indulgently from the boy’s “dream diary” and his rather self-indulgent sense of himself as a lost soul, despite his participation in all the rituals of Australian sport and student slumming (The Ganges and its Tributaries 73)—but some take on wider meaning. The image usually picked out for attention is the floating map of India in the garden pond of the narrator’s new house (The Ganges and its Tributaries 19-21). It becomes a symbol for the unanchoring of “home,” the gradual dissolution of memories and attachments, the unstable drift of migrant consciousness. Its positive side is manifested in Christopher’s father’s advocating of “drift” and mixing as the future of the world (The Ganges and its Tributaries 146). Aesthetically the drifting image is matched by the somewhat aimless narrative of a recently graduated BA trying lazily to make sense of his young life by putting it all down on paper as it comes to mind.

There are two phrases beginning over half the sentences in the book: “I walked […]” and “I imagine […]”. The narrator is rather too keen to present himself as an artistic flâneur: “As I walk I imagine that I am carrying the writer on my back. I imagine that he memorises everything he sees […]” (The Ganges and its Tributaries 133). This documenting does not make for lively prose, nor do the entirely subjective imaginings carry much sense of necessity or aesthetic power. As when the narrator puts the dog’s lead around his own neck, it seems like a juvenile strain after the obvious: the dog is walking the man, ho, ho (The Ganges and its Tributaries 134). One wonders whether the title and structure of the narration are not simply a literary joke: that this is merely an experiment in roman fleuve. Christopher’s writing matches his girlfriend’s artwork:

Nowadays when I write, I imagine that I am composing my sentences in the same way that Susannah made her collages.
I imagine the writer in me rearranging the backgrounds of photographs, fitting gulls into bays, and transplanting the rooms of houses. (The Ganges and its Tributaries 133)

The times of his narration jump around for no apparent reason—from 1979 to 1986, for example (The Ganges and its Tributaries 134-135), although eventually randomness becomes its own logic and implies the anomic of alienated second-generation hyphenated youth. Christopher himself is sterile as befits his unproductive life (The Ganges and its Tributaries 126-128).

The narrator’s cousin Vismara, takes his dream book to India to find a mandala to decorate it with. Critics Sumithra and Ramachandra refer to the mandala as “an enclosure for the play of consciousness” (The Ganges and its Tributaries 427), which is not a bad description of Cyrill’s fiction. In so far as it is also “a plan of the universe”, it mediates the interior and exterior aspects of the novels, drawing our
attention to the globalised, variegated but potentially harmonious world of diasporic identity—a series of patterns that contain empty spaces and may trap the quester in sterile circles, but which promises fertile ground at its centre (The Ganges and its Tributaries 428-429).

As T. S. Eliot (1940) had it: “In my end is my beginning” (204), and The Ganges and its Tributaries opens with a quote from the Upanishads: “Whatever is one’s thinking, therewith he enters into life.” The title seems to imply a universalism—on the one hand, the Pangaea of primordial unity and utopian human mixing celebrated by Christopher’s father, and on the other a foundational origin in relation to which Anglo-Indians are tributaries to mainstream India, and even a brash and bleakly new Australian suburbia is a tributary to ancient learning and India. But the book does not support such a reading overall. It is restless and unsatisfied. In its world, people mill about or separate; it is only in the narrator’s mind that things come together: continents collide, India is fused with Australia, historical periods coalesce under the influence of his father’s saxophone playing (The Ganges and its Tributaries 168). His writing ultimately attempts what it figures in the final sentence: the global as an act of the imagination never completely unified with or freed from the local: two intersecting circles—not unified but partially linked (The Ganges and its Tributaries 173). Perhaps this could stand as a figure for Australian-Indian connections in general.

---

Endnote

1 This paper was first presented at the “Globalisation and Postcolonial Writing: An Australia-India Exchange,” conference organised by the Centre for Postcolonial Writing, Monash U and U of Calcutta, Kolkata, India, 7-9 February 2006.

---

Works Cited


Australia and Asia:
Indian Moments in Henry Kingsley’s
The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn,
An Australian Accent in Mira Nair’s
Monsoon Wedding and Some New Directions in
Australian Literary Studies

Richard Hosking

The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn (1859) is the "foundational work for Australian literary studies," and has been accepted as one of the most interesting of the mid-century fictional representations written by British writers of squat life in eastern Australia in the 1820s and 1830s "before the Gold," that is, before the gold rushes of the 1850s. It has held a central position on the library shelf entitled "early British/Australian colonial romance (masculine sub-variety)." Although its claims to be the foundation text of Australian literary studies has been challenged in the light of the resurrection of a numbers of later colonial fictions written in Australia (and especially those by women), The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn remains the paradigmatic British Australian colonial romance; it offers a complex representation of the imperial enterprise in its settler-colonial version. Shaped as it was by colonial attitudes to adventure, Christianity, the environment, masculinity, race and gender, like so many other colonial fictions and poetry The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn can be re-read in the light of a contemporary postcolonial awareness.

Of particular interest at the conclusion of the novel is a moment when relationships between Australia and Asia come into focus, when we become aware of the empire offering, in Edward Said’s (1993) phrase, "realms of possibility" (75), especially for free, white, wealthy, Protestant, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon males.1 When all of the novel’s action is just about over (and action and derring-do there is in plenty: pioneering, bushfires, bushrangers, children lost in the bush, attacks by Aborigines; what would become the standard narrative set pieces for later popular colonial fiction), a scene is offered on the broad cool verandah of Caroopna, Captain Brentwood’s station homestead somewhere in the high country of more-or-less Gippsland, eastern Victoria, on the south-east coast of Australia. The narrative voice is not that of Henry Kingsley’s, but that of his narrator, the bachelor Geoffry Hamlyn, and his companions in the scene are various members of the several families whose colonial doings form the basis of the last half of the novel. Jim Brentwood lies in his hammock reading Charles Dickens’ Pickwick Papers, Mrs. Buckley is "doing something," while Alice sits "with her hands fallen on her lap, so still and beautiful that she might then and there have been photographed off by some enterprising artist, and exhibited in the print shops as 'Argia, Goddess of Laziness.'" (The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn 536).
Imagine three months to have passed. That stormy spring had changed into a placid, burning summer. The busy shearing-time was past; the noisy shearers were dispersed, heaven knows where (most of them probably suffering from a shortness of cash, complicated with delirium tremens). The grass in the plains had changed from green to dull grey; the river had changed his hoarse roar for a sleepy murmur, as though too lazy to quarrel with his boulders in such weather. A hot dull haze was over forest and mountain. The snow had perspired till it showed long black streaks on the highest summits. In short, summer had come with a vengeance; everyone felt hot, idle, and thirsty, and "there was nothing doing."

Now that broad cool verandah of Captain Bunwoot's, with its deep recesses of shadow, was a place not to be lightly spoken of. Any man once getting footing there, and leaving it, except on compulsion, would show himself of weak mind. Any man once comfortably settled there in an easy chair, who fetched anything for himself when he could get any one else to fetch it for him, would show himself, in my opinion, a man of weak mind. One thing only was wanted to make it perfect, and that was niggers. To the winds with "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and "Dred" after it, in a hot wind! What can an active-minded, self-helpful lady like Mrs. Stowe, freezing up there in Connecticut, obliged to do something to keep herself warm,—what can she, I ask, know about the requirements of a southern gentleman when the thermometer stands at 120° in the shade? Pish! Does she know the exertion required for cutting up a pipe of tobacco in a hot north wind? No! Does she know the amount of perspiration and sugar superinduced by knocking the head off a bottle of Bass in January? Does she know the physical prostration which is caused by breaking up two lumps of hard white sugar in a pawnee before a thunderstorm? No, she doesn't, or she would cry out for niggers with the best of us! When the thermometer gets over 100° in the shade, all men would have slaves if they were allowed. An Anglo-Saxon conscience will not, save in rare instances, bear a higher average heat than 95°.

But about this verandah. It was the model and type of all verandahs. It was made originally by the Irish family, the Donovan's, before spoken of; and, like all Irish-made things, was nobly conceived, beautifully carried out, and then left to take care of itself, so that when Alice came into possession, she found it a neglected mine of rare croppers run wild. Here, for the first time, I saw the exquisite crimson passion-flower, then a great rarity. Here, too, the native passion-flower, scarlet and orange, was tangled up with the common purple sarsaparilla and the English honeysuckle and jessamine. (The Recollections of Geoffy Hamlyn 536-537; the reference to passion-flower has been foootnoted by Kingsley; "Passiflora Loudonii, I believe")

The representations of the nature of the settler-colonial enterprise are explicit in this passage: racism, colonialism, sexism, class consciousness, xenophobia, capitalist exploitation and ecological assimilationism come together in a thick description (the idea of "thick description" draws on Geertz 6-10). The point of the passage is, above all, the impact that the Australian environment and climate makes on (relatively) newwhum arrivals, and while Australian temperatures may never reach those experienced in India in the weeks before the monsoon, it is still hot enough, it seems, to encourage Englishmen and women to seek out the shade of a wide verandah, an easy chair, tobacco and beer. I have fond memories of attending a seminar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in 1989, when Professor Meenakshi Mukherjee made the remark to the effect that if India suffers from the effects of rather too much history, then Australia suffers from far too much geography.

In The Recollections of Geoffy Hamlyn Australia is constructed as a place of possibilities, an interesting and exotic place where the already wealthy can make even more money. The view from the verandah is the view from "government house," the head station where the owners live, and it is the genial and benign gaze of the successful and self-satisfied man looking out on the fruits and flowers of years of toil and labour. While these Gippsland stations Baroona and Garoorna may be owned by "sterling" Englishmen, the hard physical work was originally done by the likes of Magwitch and Rufus Dawes, that is, by convict or exconvict "currency" labour, men and women forbidden or unable to return to Britain. Hamlyn mentions the "noisy shearers," currency lads who blow their money on a spree after shearing is finished instead of saving up to buy back the family lands in Britain, clearly indicating that their ways of living are scornfully rejected and then suppressed by Kingsley's obsessively sterilizing view; as a consequence of their perceived roles as subordinates, they are dismissed from sight. Fifty years later, such characters will dominate Australian writing and displace the wealthy squatter from the national imagining.
This colonial culture is marked by seemingly unbridgeable hierarchies of class, caste, gender, religion and colour. The verandah (the word is of Hindi origin) is the shared space where the outdoor men’s world and the women’s indoor and domestic worlds come together, the mediating and liminal space of encounter and exchange between the private and public worlds, between the world and the family (Giles 1). The white women in this colonial world have few active roles available to them, in that all they seem to do is to sit still and quiet on verandas. The view out from the leisureed space of the verandah is towards the garden, which is tended by convict or currency laud labour. That garden is now a reworked, hybrid creation crafted from selected culling from the former “wilderness” and from a carefully hoarded stock of plants brought to Australia, creating a richly symbolic space that is full of plants for which the narrator has names. While Garooppa had been originally owned and worked by the ex-convict Irish Donovans, now they have long departed—as have the noisy shearers—leaving only a swearing magpie and Jim’s laughter at a scene from Pickwick to break the somnolent silence of the summer’s day.

What do we make of Hamlyn’s remarks about niggers? The wish for “niggers” to work as slaves in the Australian summer heat in order that wealthy white men might watch them work from the verandah is of considerable interest. It does not occur to the narrator Hamlyn that this country is already inhabited by “blacks” who have been dispossessed by the settlers’ enterprise; in his hierarchical colonial world, Indigenous Australians cannot even be imagined as slaves. Perhaps the remark should not be taken too seriously; Kingsley is attempting to represent his character’s genial indolence at the end of a novel in which the writer often mocks his narrator’s ignorance and bachelor insensitivity (on this aspect of the novel’s narrative technique, see Mellick, Morgan and Eggert xxvi). At one point, for instance, Kingsley footnotes some dialogue between Jerry, “a tame black” and Jim Brentwood, in which Indigenous English is represented. Jerry describes himself as “cobbon thirsty,” meaning very thirsty, the word coming from the Dharuk people around Sydney (this point is made by Mellick, Morgan and Eggert 1996). Jim then offers some brandy, asking if there are any kangaroos about, as the men intend to go on a horseback hunt. He says to Jerry: “Yowi, but mine want it big one flying doe,” which Kingsley footnotes with the remark: “Yowi means yes. But Mr Hamlyn is a little incorrect in using it here. It is more of a Moreton Bay word” (The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn 332).

The writer Henry Kingsley’s attitudes to race seem to have been rather more complicated than his narrator’s, and in the light of events a few years after The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn was published it is possible to read narrator Hamlyn’s remarks as rather more ambivalently loaded than merely ignorant, simply typical of the viciously casual racism of his day. On the one hand, according to his biographer J. S. D. Mellick (1983), Kingsley’s mother’s family fortunes were considerably affected by the end of the slave trade in the West Indies (7). On the other hand, Kingsley was deeply—and publicly—involved with his brother the novelist Charles Kingsley in the 1865 controversy about Governor Edward John Eyre’s suppression of civil dissent in Morant Bay, Jamaica in which over five hundred people were killed or executed. This brutal event has a particular resonance for (South) Australians; Eyre’s name is celebrated in the pantheon of Australian explorers, he later worked as a Protector of Aborigines at Moorundoo on the River Murray and his name is preserved in the appellation Eyre Peninsula, where I grew up. Given his use of the word “nigger” in The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn, it would be reasonable to assume that Kingsley was just another imperial racist. However, in November 1865 Kingsley was quoted in a leading article in the Times, drawing on an article he had published a little earlier that month in Macmillan’s Magazine about Eyre the explorer, in which Kingsley praised Eyre’s work as Protector at Moorundoo. This prompted a further controversy in the pages of the Times when Kingsley argued the point with William Bakewell, former Crown Solicitor of the South Australian
colony, over the question of whether Aboriginal people had been massacred by settlers in southern Australia, Kingsley putting the case for widespread fatal collisions and violence (see Foster, Hosking, and Netelbeck 2000). Mellick quotes a letter to the publisher Alexander Macmillan in which Kingsley describes his row with Bakewell and which gives an indication of his beliefs:

If those shortsighted idiots, who have made fortunes on soil drenched with the blood of the natives, and have come home here and turned saint, attack me I will make hay of the lot. I am not going to be civil much longer. “The Historian of Australia” as they call me in Melbourne comes of a fighting family. (1983: 112)

Back on the verandah. The sleepy indolence of the scene is then disturbed by Captain Brentwood returning from Sydney to Carooppna with the mails; it is discovered that his son Jim is to leave for India, appointed to the 3rd Regiment, at present quartered in India [...]. So you see you now possess the inestimable privilege of wearing a red coat, and what is still better, of getting a hole made in it; for there is great trouble threatening with the Afghans [sic] and Beloochis, and the chances are that you will smell powder before you are up in your regimental duties. (The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn 539)

The implication is that both the family's military background (Brentwood is always “Captain”) and the apprenticeship Jim has served as squatter's son well equip him for taking up the white man's burden beyond Australia’s shores. A hierarchy of imperial sites is proposed: India is the jewel in the crown, lying between “Home” and far-flung Gippsland on the very edges of Empire. The Indian subcontinent—and more particularly the “North-West Frontier”—offers greater realms of opportunity than anything Australia can offer, especially for red-blooded action once Jim has joined the colours in his imperial duty; the “Afghans and Beloochis” will give the redcoats a run for their money, as they continue to do to this day. This scene (and Jim's commissioning) must be dated some time in the mid 1830s, given the detail relies on the typical wisdom of hindsight novelists so often deploy in historical novels like The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn; readers at the time would have remembered “Auckland’s Folly,” Lord Auckland’s foray into Afghanistan in 1838 and the subsequent annihilation of the British force on their retreat from Kabul to Jellalabad in 1842, and wondered if Jim had been involved.6 Kingsley completed most of the narrative of The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn after his return to England in May 1858, by which time the “Indian Mutiny,” the First War of Indian Independence, had been brutally suppressed. It is reasonable to assume that the reading public both in Britain and in the colonies in the late 1850s would have responded strongly to the notion of Jim accepting a commission and doing his duty to Queen and Empire. There was work to be done to keep the natives in order. Details about the Indian Mutiny were widely reported in the Australian papers, reinforcing Robert Young’s (1995) view of the profound significance of the Mutiny to the hardening of British (and colonial) attitudes to race in the last half of the nineteenth century, which again helps us see the remark about “niggers” in a broader political and cultural context (92). It is worth digressing to note a further connection between India and Australia in this regard; Charles Dickens decided to publish the Australian-born writer John Lang’s topical pieces about India in his Household Words in November 1857, many of which later appeared as Wanderings in India in 1859 and which feature places, events and characters made famous during the uprising.

The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn closes with a flurry of departures and subsequent travel, either back to Britain via Cape Horn or on to other parts of Empire; India is always there:

I remember few things [...] of note. A great American ship in 45°, steaming in the teeth of the wind, bearing her long gleaming sails through the roll of the South Atlantic. The Royal Charter passing us like a phantom ship through the hot line, when we were becalmed on the line, waking the silence of the heaving glassy seas with her throbbing propeller. A valiant and glorious little gunboat going out all the way to China by herself, giving herself the airs of a seventy-four, requiring boats to be sent on board her, as if we couldn’t have rowed her, guns and all, on our poop, and never
crowded ourselves! A noble transport, with 53 painted on her bows, swarming with soldiers for India, to whom we gave three times three. (The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn 572-573)

There may be one American ship—at least they are more or less Anglo-Saxon—but there are many more British vessels, mailships and warships, all out and about on the Empire’s business, traversing the realms of possibility. After the solitude of the Australian “wilderness,” the sea is relatively crowded, anticipating the crowded streets of London, the great metropolis to which these globe-trotting colonists are now returning.

Just as the novel concludes with travelling back to Britain, and the restoration of these characters to familiar and homely Devon settings, so too are there transformations brought about as a direct consequence of the colonial experience. Sam Buckley returns rich and successful to England, the owner of 118,000 sheep back in New England, and richer again through land speculations in and around Melbourne that had made him 1000 per cent profit after the gold rushes. He can buy back Clerc, the family seat, and as literary luck would have it, his wife Agnes inherits Beaulieu Castle next door. There are further transformations in status and standing as suitable rewards for labouring in the Antipodes. Two of the minor characters are revealed as aristocrats, one an Irish peer, the other a German Count who returns to head the Prussian government, and, after his parliamentary defeat, then to write his “great book,” The History of Fanaticism and Fanaticism, from Mahomet to Joe Smith, an early attempt to understand the terrorist phenomenon (The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn 578; Joe Smith was the founder of the Mormons). Just about the entire cast of characters (including honest servants) returns to England, all of them much wealthier than on the day of their departure, all intent to reclaim what they insist and expect is their rightful position back home in metropolitan society.

Jim Brentwood, the young man on the veranda reading Pickwick Papers, the young man whose Australian experience would have been made even more comfortable had he been able to keep slaves, is also remembered. Jim’s exploits in India in the late 1830s are described in a letter he writes to his father:

I have been down among the dead men, and since then up into the seventh heaven, in consequence of being not only gazzetted, but promoted. The beggars nearly did for us. All our fortifications, the prettiest things ever done under the circumstances, executed under Bobby’s own eye, were thrown down by […] an earthquake! Perhaps we didn’t swear—Lord forgive us! Akbar had a shy at us immediately, but got a most immortal licking […] My wound is nearly all right again. It is only a prick with a spear in my thigh. (The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn 565)

Some sixteen years later, when all the characters have reassembled in Britain, Hamlyn meets Jim Brentwood again. His face is scarred, and he wears a handsome pair of curling moustachios. He has recently been in Ireland with his regiment after the “last great campaign” at the Battle of Alma (Crimean War, 20 September 1854), and has now been decorated by Queen Victoria with a “certain bit of gun metal” (The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn 580). They travel down by train to visit Sam Buckley at Clerc; the squire picks them up from the Wildmere station. Sam is having trouble with the horses in the pair-horse phaeton, prompting Jim to remember a moment in Calcutta when two of his friends had tried to drive a pair of fresh imported Australian tandems through the town, only to be upset by the walers coming face to face with an elephant (The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn 581). This is a fascinating detail in The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn, because the source for this anecdote is the writing of the Australian-born writer John Lang, who lived and worked in India for many years; this story became well-known enough for Rudyard Kipling to use it as the basis for his poem “Municipal,” which first appeared in the Civil and Military Gazette, 9 May 1887, under the title “The D.C.’s Story” (see Crittenden 84). Australian and Indian experience run together—Australian horses bolt at the sight of an elephant—The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn, the foundational work of Australian literary studies, draws on the work of the first Australian-born writer John Lang, who would later also
influence Rudyard Kipling (I have argued elsewhere that Lang's work may well have been known to Kipling, see Hosking 1995).

What emerges from this discussion about some aspects of the conclusion to The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn is that as long as ago as the mid-nineteenth century the cultural connections between Australia and at least some parts of Asia were complex and long-term. Two particular groups of stories of trading and exchange from the colonial period interest me greatly: the first about the sealing trade, the second about camels. These days, we talk of long-term trade in uranium, mined at the Olympic Dam mine at Roxby Downs, just to the north west a little from Samuel Stuckey's and Thomas Elders' stations.

After the various European settlements were established in the various parts of what is now Australia in the years after 1788, the early economic activity in the new colonies depended almost entirely on trade with Asia, especially with India and, to a lesser extent, China. Sealskins and seal oil were some of the first products to be traded. The first phase of the sealing industry was based on the discovery of seal rookeries on the Bass Strait islands, when the Calcutta ship the Sydney Cove was beached in 1797. Commanded by Captain G.A. Hamilton and owned by Campbell, Clark and Co. of Calcutta, she had been sailing for Sydney with a cargo of consumer goods, including "India goods," chinaware, 7,000 gallons of Bengali rum, wine, spirits, general merchandise, foodstuffs and even some livestock. Hamilton's orders were to sell the cargo at Sydney and then take his crew sealing on their way back to Calcutta (Steven 23). After sustaining storm damage south-west of Tasmania she began taking on water and, with all hands at the pumps, the stricken Sydney Cove ran up the east coast of Tasmania. The labour at the pumps was so physically exhausting that five of the "lascars" (Indian seamen) died, while another British seaman was lost overboard. Then a second easterly gale drove the ship west into what would later be called Bass Strait, and the order was given to jettison some of the cargo. On the advice of chief mate Hugh Thompson, Hamilton decided to run her aground as soon as a suitable place might be found: a sandy cove on the south shore of Preservation Island in the Furneaux Group is her final resting-place. She touched in six metres of water on 8 February 1797 (see Lester 1; Begg and Begg 54). After landing the crew without further losses, Hamilton took the precaution of offloading the rum to what is known today as Rum Island. The survivors built a hut out of the timbers from the wreck and settled in to await rescue, making short trips to some of the other islands in the Furneaux Group, on one of which Hamilton noticed strong tidal rips that indicated the presence of a strait between the mainland and Van Diemen's Land.

Hamilton then ordered the longboat to take the news of the wreck to Sydney and sent a letter to Governor John Hunter with his speculations about a strait. Seventeen men set off, including Thompson and another company man, William Clark. After coasting north their boat was wrecked near Point Hicks on the main, and they were forced to walk to Port Jackson. The majority died along the way. Some were killed by Aborigines, only three, Clark and two "lascars," reached their destination. Clark left a memorable diary of their travails (Clark's journal can be found in Historical Records of New South Wales, 1893-1901: 757-768). Matthew Flinders was a member of the relief party sent to secure the wreck and its contents; his report to Governor Hunter about seal numbers on the Bass Strait islands led the sealers to Bass Strait rookeries.

Calcutta entrepreneurs moved quickly to New South Wales to take advantage of the possibilities offered by trading, firstly in general goods, in seal and whale products, with seal skins first exported to China for processing as early as 1798. In my own state, South Australia, one of the first major exports in the early years after settlement was horses to India, the famous "walers" (New South Walers), remount horses destined the Indian Army and later for the streets of India. Horses, however, were of little use in the outback, the arid lands of Central Australia that were increasingly
being taken up for pastoral activities after mid-century. Camels were the answer, as was obvious, after they had been used with some success by the Burke and Wills expedition in 1860. Samuel Stuckey traveled to Karachi in 1862 to assess the possibility of bringing camels to South Australia from India; in 1866 a hundred or so arrived, with thirty-one “Afghans” to manage them. While the popular memory in Australia has it that these camels and cameleers came from Afghanistan—hence the name of the famous train that runs between Adelaide and Alice Springs, the Ghan—many of these individuals whose names can still be found in Australian telephone directories came from India and what is now Pakistan. Australia has always had rich cultural and economic links with Asia, and with South Asia in particular.

The evidence of ongoing research and bibliographic work on both colonial and postcolonial writing will turn up many such connections as the Indian moments at the end of The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn or more about the “lascars” who died at the pumps and who walked and died on Australia’s east coast in 1797. While my own interest is in the colonial period, many opportunities exist to think creatively about how we negotiate and represent present and future relationships between Australia and Asia. AustLit (http://www.auslit.edu.au) should be the first port of call, drawing as it does on long-term bibliographic work completed by many scholars around Australia and beyond (see Jacobs and Hosking 1995). To take India as an example: while it is a simple matter to find individual authors who have written about India—for example, Ethel Anderson and Mena Abdullah in their short stories, or Mudrooroo, John Kinsella, Jeri Kroll, Syd Harrex or Sudesh Mishra in their poems—contemporary on-line bibliographic services make it possible to consider rather more complicated questions, like why it is that (more or less) twice as many Australian men seem to have written about India as have women. And why was there in the midst of Australian literary representations of not just India but many Asian nations in the first decade of the twentieth century? The dramatic increase in literary interest in Asia in the 1970s and 1980s may be easier to explain, but what was it about the years just before the World War II? Has the output from the last two decades matched that from the 1970s and 1980s? Advanced searches will turn up many such research questions.

Another text signals a dramatically shift in awareness about the Australia-Asia relationship that moves beyond the early British-led attempts at what these days we call globalisation. There is a resonating moment in Mira Nair’s 2001 film Monsoon Wedding, when “NRI” cousin Rahul Chadha (played by Randeep Hooda) arrives from Sydney for the wedding, and we hear a broad Australian accent. While little is made in the film of this moment, other to signal that a cousin has arrived from overseas, it remains a signal moment of recognition and awareness; there has been a diaspora, and in this globalising world a cousin can arrive from Australia. Randeep Hooda, the actor in question, studied in Melbourne in the 1990s.

This growing interest in “Asia” that has been under way since 1941 and which has gained pace since 1975, can be seen in the astonishing success of Charmaine Solomon’s The Complete Asian Cookbook (1976), a book which symbolises a profound shift in the Australian zeitgeist and which I suspect has had a far greater cultural impact on everyday Australian life than anything achieved by any single work of fiction or poetry with an Asian theme or setting. Now there are courses and programs in food writing available in a number of Australian universities. Perhaps it was the success of Solomon’s cookbook that encouraged Christine Mangala’s publishers to include a “supplement” of Tamil vegetarian recipes in the 1991 edition of her novel The Firewalkers. The dramatic increase in the publication of texts by individuals from the various immigrant communities can easily be examined in the bibliographic databases: writers like Adib Khan,
Yasmine Gooneratne and Chandani Lokuge are now part of the mainstream literary world in Australia.

As my discussion about a popular text and comments about cook books have already implied, the impact on Australian literary scholarship of both cultural studies and creative writing has been profound in the last couple of decades; while the John Howard, then Prime Minister of Australia may have criticised the teaching of cultural studies in Australian schools and universities, the fact remains that this body of influential theory has allowed and even encouraged researchers to turn to the fabric and detail of everyday life and find alternatives to author-based studies. While in 1960 or 1970 postgraduates might have been encouraged to consider working on such mainstream poets as A. D. Hope or Judith Wright or novelists like Patrick White, now all kinds of options suggest themselves and are being studied by postgraduates in Australian universities. In my institution, Flinders University, individuals are tackling creative biography, film studies, online writing, computer gaming, food writing, adventure novels, thrillers, historical novels, Indigenous studies and travel writing, as well as the more traditional author and national literatures-based topics.

As my remarks suggest, there has been a (somewhat controversial) shift in emphasis in Australian universities away from studying national literatures and towards placing Australian writing into broader global contexts and settings that are often cross-cultural. The publishing industry has always been interested in global markets, and these days in our courses some of us set novels like The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn against other colonial fictions from around the British Empire. This has encouraged interest in popular fiction and in genre fiction. Historical novels and thrillers offer rich fields for further investigation; there are growing numbers of both with Asian settings. One particularly intriguing example is Michael O’Connor’s An Act of War (1990), which speculates about the consequences of Australia and India coming into armed conflict over bases in the Indian Ocean.

An interest in “life writing” is also a significant new development that is already shaping long-term research in Australian Studies. There is a great deal of interest in (auto)biography, not just in researching the considerable body of writing that now exists, but also writing creatively in the various forms. Gregory David Roberts’ Shantaram (2003) is a well-received example of what might be seen as a hybrid form: a novel based closely on autobiographical experience. There are many other individual stories that might be told, either as fictions, historical novels or as biographies. Examples include the young woman Alice Richman, who was born in Melrose, South Australia, on 13 November 1856 and who died in India of cholera in January 1886; she is buried in what is now known as the Alice Gardens at Pune University. Then there is the giant “Afghan” cameleer Dervish Bejah, remembered in Australia for the scene in John Heyer’s influential “travelogue” The Back of Beyond (1954), praying towards Mecca at Marree, in the outback. The script for this film was partly written by the poet Douglas Stewart, editor of the Bulletin. Bejah was born in Baluchistan in 1862, and is buried in South Australia in Port Augusta (http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au). Travel writing is another significant and richly rewarding area of life writing, with a long and fertile tradition that links John Lang’s Wanderings in India to Robyn Davidson’s Desert Places (1996). Robin Gerster’s study Hotel Asia (1995) is an indispensable resource for anyone interested in Australia-Asia travelling.

A particular interest of mine is another flourishing variety of life writing, sports writing, especially cricketers writing about cricket. There is a considerable and mostly unexamined cricket literature, including the memoirs of cricketers, many of whom have written entertainingly and
well about touring “the subcontinent,” as South Asia is still called in such writing. To my knowledge there has not yet been any sustained attempt to examine this body of writing. All this work to do!

---

**Endnotes**

1 Said has described the empire as “an easily assumed place of travel, wealth, and service […] associated with sustained possession, with far-flung and sometimes unknown spaces […] with fortune-enhancing or fantasised activities like emigration, money-making, and sexual adventure […] . The colonial territories are realms of possibility” (75).

2 Magwitch is the convict who makes his fortune in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* (1871); Rufus Dawes is the protagonist in Marcus Clarke’s *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1871). Class hierarchies are profoundly real in Kingsley’s representation of station life in the 1820s; elsewhere in the novel Kingsley has the following to say:

> Both Major Buckley and Captain Brentwood made it a law of the Medes and the Persians that neither of their sons should hold any conversation with the convict servants, save in the presence of competent authorities; and, indeed, they both, as soon as increased emigration enabled them, removed their old [convict] household servants and replaced them by free men, newly arrived; a law independent class, certainly, with exaggerated notions of their own importance in this new phase of their life, but without the worst vices of the convicts. (*The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* 250)

3 Earlier in the novel, Kingsley offers this now-famous description of one of the station workers, a lad he represents as of a particular and characteristic subaltern caste:

> one of those long-legged, slabsided, lean, sunburnt, cabbage-tree-hatted lads, of whom Captain Brentwood kept always, say half a dozen, and the Major four or five (I should fancy, no relation to one another, and yet so exactly alike, that Captain Brentwood never called them by their right names by any change), lads who were employed about the stable and the paddock, always in some way with the horses […] representatives of the rising Australian generation. (*The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* 394).

This is one of the influential early representations of what would become accepted as the archetypal Australian, and still remains a significant and meaningful national stereotype for the great majority of Australians.


5 It is a common cliché that British writers like Kingsley (or D. H. Lawrence) were unable to “see” the Australian bush (blinded as they were with “bias-smeared spectacles,” as Joseph Furphy would have it). In many places in *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* Kingsley demonstrates that even after a short stay of three or so years, he learned a great deal about Australian flora and fauna, and can name plants and trees. I have often given Australian students a simple exercise to encourage them to think about this conventional wisdom about so-called British colonial blindness; on the grounds of Flinders University in South Australia is a remnant colony of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, the ubiquitous Australian river red gum. Over the years just a handful of the hundreds I have taught have been able to identify and name the most common eucalypt in Australia.

6 Given Lady Butler’s 1879 painting “The Remnants of an Army” that shows the single survivor Dr. Brydon on his horse arriving before the Jellalabad walls 13 January 1842 while the relief forces pour out the gate towards him, we might wonder how Jim fared.

7 The earthquake occurred 19 February 1842 at Jalalabad, a month after the disastrous retreat from Kabul, and the ensuing battle with AKB Khan on 7 April 1842 saved Jalalabad.

8 There has widespread reporting of the supposed “obliteration of Oz lit” in twenty-first century Australian universities, prompted in part by the retirement of Professor Elizabeth Webby from Sydney University. See *Weekend Australian*, 2-3 December 2006: 46.
Works Cited


Clarke, Marcus. For the Term of His Natural Life. 1871. Melbourne: George Robertson, 1874.


Weekend Australian 2-3 December 2006: 4-6.
Inaccuracy and Distortion as Means of Positioning the Reader: A Study of Turtle Beach Texts

J. V. D'Cruz and William Steele

Why write a piece about Turtle Beach (1981) by Blanche d'Alpuget, a work that (as a book and as a film) hardly has the aesthetic or academic qualities to fit it into anybody's idea of the canonical, a cause célèbre that has lost both currency and celebrity?

Linguistics, Postcolonial Studies and the Fact/Fiction Text

In a hundred years time the Turtle Beach texts may well be read only as an historical curiosity. However, popular works outside the canon are going to be read (or viewed) by more people than canonical works over a limited period of time. How limited the period is will vary from case to case. Turtle Beach the novel, first appearing in 1981, has sold over 55,000 copies, including more than 11,000 since 1991, mostly in 1992 (Milwright in a personal communication). This extended sales period possibly suggests that the book has somehow been meeting a need of the times, and was not just a fad. The 1992 film, although itself a commercial failure, evidently contributed to sales of the book. The frontispiece of our reprinted edition boasts that the novel won the Sydney PEN Golden Jubilee Award, The Age Book of the Year Award, the South Australian Government's Bicentennial Award for Literature, and the Braille Book of the Year Award. D'Alpuget not only convinces her ordinary reader that she has something intelligent and worthwhile to say, but has also been able to convince (presumably knowledgeable) award committees of her achievement. It therefore seems reasonable and relevant to explore what need apparently was met by this book, and what sort of view of Australia and Malaysia/Asia it suggests. There are also reasons (other than making a virtue of necessity) to suggest that such an exploration might be especially well-timed some years after the release of the notorious film. Anything sooner could have given free publicity to a work one would not wish to promote. Ben Joned (1994) comments that officially Malaysian reactions to such things might have this unintended effect (169). Furthermore, a lapse of time sufficient for retrospection (but still allowing clear recall) can assist us in locating such an episode in its wider and ongoing context.

Furthermore, the book represents a particular quasi-journalistic genre on the boundary between fact and fiction. Of course, as David Lodge (1996) points out, the novel has always been an unstable form hovering between the two; however, he also points out that, just when the author has been pronounced dead by post-structuralist criticism, real authors "cannot but see themselves as engaged in a process of communication with an actual or potential audience" (16) given the proliferating means of electronic communication and greater authorial involvement in marketing, with commercial success
becoming the touchstone of judgement in the literary world. This has tended to collapse the distinction between high and popular literature (and, one could add, that between author and narrator). Lodge describes as an elementary readerly mistake the assumption that all elements of a novel will be factually accurate because some are; but the “mistake” is certainly rather common, and imposes particular responsibilities on the author (23). It is too lame to state, as d’Alpuget does in a statement prefacing Turtle Beach that “This book is fiction. Any similarity between its characters and persons living or dead is purely coincidental” (viii). At the outset, the (textual) Kuala Lumpur riot of May 1969, and those taking part in it, cannot be held ingenuously to differ from the (extratextual) Kuala Lumpur riot of May 1969, and those taking part in it. Without further guidance, readers can reasonably be expected to draw similar links between other events in the book and the world.

Such issues have relevance beyond this particular instance. Despite being somewhat submerged in the era of high aesthetic modernism,² the fact/fiction genre has again become prevalent in the West in the era of electronic communications, in particular television. Through imitating their immediacy, the genre bolsters its authority. Turtle Beach, like many such works, has political significance in a more everyday sense than the canon. Like works of the canon can (and often do), it reflects and tends to entrench a certain kind of power relationship (in this case neo-colonial in nature); but, in addition, its portrayal of factual events alarmed Malaysia’s Prime Minister. Besides the treatment of the facts, that is of that which is received through the senses, plays a vital role in the portrayal and implicit justification of the power relationships, a justification derived in no small part through the respect that is garnered by (apparently) directly recorded sensory data in the electronic age. So, for instance, Turtle Beach the book, in addition to its obvious reliance on historical incidents referred to above, gives the illusion of being the result of direct transcription from a video-recorder. Issues arise not just of the selection and interpretation of what is seen and heard (a “direct transcription” being a contradiction in terms), but of whether certain things could have been seen or heard at all.

Finally, the views both of what Asia is like, and of how we can know that, find their distinctive reflection in the wider spheres of Australian domestic politics and international relations.

Perhaps surprisingly, few of these fact/fiction works are sited in Asia. Asia does afford Australians many tourist destinations, hence the title of Robin Gerster’s collection of Australian writing of Asia, Hotel Asia (1995). Yet, Asia remains something of a dark continent for Australians, and much of the representation of Asia’s/as in Australia has been dark in several senses: not of the mainstream; often derived from non-Anglo Australians—director Clara Law who is of Asian descent, and European writers David Martin, born Ludwig Desenyi, and more recently the Italian-born Australian of Hungarian extraction, Inez Barany; perhaps set in Australia rather than Asia—such as Geoffrey Wright’s film Romper Stomper (1992), which ran into trouble with its representation of the Melbourne suburb of Footscray; and tending not so much towards purported reportage as towards obscurantist “spiritualisation” in the style made famous by Hermann Hesse—for example, Peter Loftus’ 1972 novel about Malaysia and Singapore, The Earth Drum (see a discussion in Gerster, 1995: 309). This remains true even though more recently Asia and its representation have been of intense interest. Frost (1994) observes that the scarcity of apparently faithful representations led to valuing dubious products such as the Australian television series Embassy (1990-1992). The scarcity certainly increases the importance of Turtle Beach, a book and film born not of “darkness” but out of the very nerve centre of Australian “liberal enlightenment”; there is a large picture in the Australian (22 June 1999: 4) of author d’Alpuget watching the cricket at Lords, flanked by her husband, former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, and then Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. The novel Turtle Beach is the only Australian fiction recommended in the 2003 internet version of the Lonely Planet guide to Malaysia. Turtle Beach, and a very well written
book of nevertheless dubious postcoloniality set in Indonesia, Christopher Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978), are the only two fact/fiction works quoted at length in the "Foreign Correspondents" subsection of Genster's *Hotel Asia*, and these are the two texts pertaining to Asia that approach household name status in Australia, and which resurface in various forms. Koch's novel was filmed too (1982), and has been adapted with some publicity into a stage play for the Festival of Perth, discussed in the *Australian Magazine* (20-21 February 1999: 13-15). These two are truly landmark novels and each bears detailed reading, which remains part of the armoury for the understanding of texts and their signs. Because our interest is principally in the Australian-Malaysian relationship, we deal with *Turtle Beach*.

The problem, then, is not that *Turtle Beach* is unimportant, but that it is important in such a variety of ways. To try at least to touch on all of them, in this volume we take an eclectic and multi-disciplinary approach, concentrating on the book (rather than the film) as the enduringly popular and available manifestation of *Turtle Beach*. In keeping with its style of reportage, it contains an enormous amount of dialogue (especially from the mouths of its Asian characters). In the first instance, we want to address how closely their ostensibly directly recorded words fit the known facts of Malaysian English (an essentially dialectological question). Then, finding that the fit is not close at all, we will consider how the nature of the incongruence, taken in combination with the content of the message, serves to reinforce certain underlying racist metaphors of what Asians are like (for instance, the metaphor of Asian as animal) as well as to suggest the nonviable nature of Malaysia as a polity. Thus; we work through linguistics towards postcolonial notions of diagnosing sources of textual oppression and considering approaches to resistant reading. We would add that the (racist) values transmitted more or less covertly by the text are shared by some Australians, forming both a plausible partial account of the book's popularity, and a justification for our opening a path for all its readers, Asian or Australian, to deconstruct it.

Linguistic research has seldom been applied or even alluded to in postcolonial studies, and with the present work we hope to make a modest contribution to the closure of this surprising gap. After all, as Robert Phillipson (1992) points out, the dominance of English over other languages is a paradigm example of linguistic imperialism, and the same can be said for the valuing of particular forms of English over others. Charles Ferguson (1971) drew attention to the existence of "Foreigner Talk," that is, a specific register of language used by native speakers to represent the language of nonnative speakers that differs significantly from the language actually used by the latter; yet, in its subsequent study there have been few examples of data drawn from literature (as opposed to sources such as interviews and workplaces). In the other direction, postcolonialists (indeed literary critics in general) do not investigate the linguistic roots of Foreigner Talk; thus Edward Brathwaite (1995) alludes (in effect) to the distinction between Foreigner Talk and genuine creolised varieties used by non-native speakers, but he discusses only issues of power and construction, and does not formally refer to linguistic features at all.

Although it does not explicitly refer to linguistic research, work of a highly analytical type by Zawiah Yahya (1993; 1994), centering on high cultural texts, is informed by a profound sensitivity to metaphor and implicature, and has been an important spur to the present piece. We build on Yahya's methods, adapting them to suit the popular fact/fiction genre by taking issues of empirically testable faithfulness to real-world knowledge (including linguistic knowledge) into account. There is a real sense in which the present work is a post-Yahya piece; reading her work stimulated us to offer a methodology for a rather different kind of text. We also consider the broader cultural values and beliefs implicit in the Malaysian and Australian views of each other in *Turtle Beach*—using as our analytical tool the notion of a spectrum of cultural orientations on a continuum of concreteness and abstraction—and how knowledge,
feelings and skills attributed to Asians and Australians serve to portray the former as less adequate. Throughout Turtle Beach, in language and in all other aspects of human behaviour, the West is the yardstick. What happens is that, as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1991) notes, “We internalize our history and make it an element of our moral conscience” (Lévi-Strauss and Eribon 125), and then of course “we” unload it onto others and demand they carry the burden of “our” (by now) high morality. The more abstract aspects of Western thought, feelings and behaviour are used as assimilationist benchmarks of the enlightened and desirable approach to life and thought. Once such benchmarks are set, everything else is bound to fall short. And so it happens. Turtle Beach reflects a view of Asians as being without any indigenous capacity for abstract reasoning, and mired in a messy and often violent concreteness so as to be unable to stand outside themselves and effect solutions to their problems by “their” own agency and without “our” help.

The Appearance and Reception of the Turtle Beach Texts

In early 1992, the film Turtle Beach opened in Australia. Lindsay Murdoch reported in the Age (28 February 1992) that “Ms d’Alpuget said she was thrilled with the film. It kept the main moral issue of the book, which was concern for refugees [. . . ]” (6). Yet protests about the film were immediately forthcoming from Malaysia, principally on the grounds of historical distortions. The film and the book revolve around two women, Judith Wilkes (the narrator) and Minou Hobday. The former is an Australian journalist working in Malaysia in the late 1970s, as she had done ten years earlier at the time of the Kuala Lumpur riots. The latter woman is a half-French, half-Vietnamese (of Chinese origin) former Saigon bar girl, now wife of the Australian High Commissioner. Her children from previous liaisons are still in Vietnam, and she anticipates their arrival at a place called “Turtle Beach” on a refugee boat. The climax of both book and film occurs when Minou, watched by Judith, apparently drowns herself in an effort to reach and assist an incoming refugee boat, which she believes her children to be aboard. The film, although not the book, then includes a scene in which local people (apparently Malay) hack helpless refugees to pieces on the beach as they swim ashore. In their protests to the film, the Malaysian authorities pointed out that such massacres did not occur. The Australian parties concerned (author, director and government), while naturally unable to prove counterfactually that such events occurred, were in their various ways all less than apologetic. The producer, Matt Carroll, consistently went so far as to state that such massacres did take place, while the Australian government through its Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, (The Australian 26 February 1992) noted that the film was a “fictional drama” (3), adding that its “depiction of extreme violence against boat people” (3), and a number of other things, were “whatever their claims to artistic justification, simply not accurate historical representations” (3), thereby of course suggesting that the film in all its inaccuracy could ultimately be justified through purporting to be artistic fiction rather than history.

The position occupied by Blanche d’Alpuget rested uneasily between the two. On the one hand, she claimed in The Age (12 February 1992), she was “absolutely certain that people were killed on the beaches,” with only the number (which she had admitted may have been no greater than one) and the method (stoning rather than parangs) being matters of artistic licence (11). On the other hand, she complained in The Age Extra (14 March 1992) that the film was in the nature of opera, not aiming to be a documentary, and “an accuracy which it never set out to provide” had been demanded of it merely because it dealt with “actual events” (4). The fact that she had just defended the relative historical accuracy of the beach massacre suggests her acceptance of the importance of accuracy as an issue in general; she is at the least trying to have it both ways. Her position is very similar in an
essay reflecting on the process of filming the book. She claims that the “Australian news media got itself in a lather of indignation over the ‘inaccurate’ massacre scene. But it is all inaccurate. None of it is real [. . .]. However, the film is true emotionally and artistically, I think” (1992: 113). Yet she had earlier conceded “The film opens with the riots—but does not explain its significance. Inevitably this leaves cinema goers with the impression that Malaysians are bloodthirsty—an impression that is reinforced later in the notorious massacre scene on the beach” (1992: 108).

The fundamental argument (forthright in the case of Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and hedged in the case of d’Alpuget) was that Turtle Beach (the film) was a creative work, and the “truths” of creativity were of a quite different (and by implication higher) order and nature to historical truth. That is to say, the right to artistic licence overrides the need for accurate reporting. This is a disturbing argument, not least because of its failure to recognise the gradedness of the categories “historiography/documentary” and “fiction/drama.” There is now a large body of scholarship demonstrating that a meticulous concern for accuracy in Western academe has been no barrier to the production of “truth” consistently supportive of the colonialisit enterprise in Asia; that is to say that historians and other scholars are in the business of producing “creative truth,” amongst other things. However, an audience has, and is surely entitled to have, certain expectations of the historical accuracy of those novels which consistently refer to “actual” people, places and times and do not contain any elements of the fantasy genre (that is, no events inconceivable in the “real” world as received through the senses, such as the transformation of a person into an insect), especially where authors publicly state that their writing is underpinned by research. In a television documentary, Wrestling with the Angel (1995), Blanche d’Alpuget said that her description of the Bidong refugee camp was based on field research into what it looked like and what it smelt like, thus specifically linking the reliability of her text with its apparently innocent recapitulation of the ostensibly unskewed evidence of the senses. The general point is that “historical” creative productions dealing with events in living memory can structure their “creative truth” particularly oppressively, causing pain and confusion, if they assert a “real-world” accuracy and authenticity that they lack (though, as alluded to above, this is not to say that accuracy obviates all problems of oppression).

This is now particularly relevant given the emergence, under the immense influence of the electronic media (especially television) in the West, of a profusion of texts, ostensibly post-colonial in spirit, dealing with Asia. They have in common a quasidocumentary technique on which their claims to credibility with a Western audience are based. Such texts may be literary or electronic, and quite commonly both. They may not fit comfortably under the postmodern umbrella, and thus remain of limited (but increasing) influence in the universities, but they may also be widely read in the broader community and consequently have considerable political importance, creating or reinforcing both Western perceptions of Asia and Asian perceptions of how it is being perceived and structured by the West. One goal of this monograph is to apply the methodology we have suggested for dealing with such quasidocumentaries to an analysis of the Turtle Beach texts (both book and film), since they are especially egregious examples of what we are discussing. Another of our goals is to open the way for an interpretation and possible resolution of the painful intercultural perceptions arising within such texts and beyond them.

Firstly, the Turtle Beach texts have had broad socio-political influence. The novel has sold very well in Australia, although it is comparatively little-known in Malaysia, and the film, despite being a commercial failure in Australia and being banned in Malaysia, has been the subject of much comment in both countries among many people who have not necessarily seen it, including Prime Minister Mahathir (The Age 17 March 1992: 5; The Age 18 March 1992: 9). Secondly, they illustrate the breakdown of the dichotomy between the two “truths,” recounted as they are by in effect a composite Judith/narrator
figure closely resembling the author—basing her credibility on her reportage, and more specifically on her apparently innocent recapitulation of real-world events, sometimes even-handedly but more often simply overlooking the part played by the camera rather than by the view in the production of such pictures. Thirdly, this is at the heart of the matter—while Turtle Beach (the book) claims implicitly to be a truly post-colonial text by strategically distancing itself from the British colonial tradition with an air of conscious self-righteousness, it also reflects and reinforces a thoroughly colonialist metaphorical system based on an abundance of stereotypical inaccuracies (which the film magnifies and multiplies) to the accompaniment of the particularly defamatory distortion of historical events discussed above. In other words, there is a gap between covert colonial metaphor and overt post-colonial rhetoric, between the message the sender is conscious of (or at least with apparent honesty claims to be) and the message that can reasonably be received (and which at a deeper level of consciousness may also be the message sent). This gap, of course, should not be entirely surprising given the political history of Australia we have outlined; but neither is it on the surface and openly acknowledged.

Our objective is not to demonise d’Alpuget. Certainly we, pluralists from an Asian and a Western background, both instinctively find Turtle Beach to be unsatisfactory, indeed indecent. Yet the author, apparently located within a liberal feminist tradition, is evidently a person of goodwill. This should not be entirely paradoxical in view of the recent vicissitudes of white feminism, often too little aware of its own racism. What Kum-Kum Bhavnani (1997) refers to as “editing women of colour out of feminist thought” (27), a process carried out largely by white feminists, has for some time been a concern of many writers of non-white feminism—these women writers of colour include Kum-Kum Bhavnani (1993; 1997), Apar Brah (1996), Angela Davis (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), Chandra Mohanty (1985; 1991), Uma Narayan (1997), Rajeswari Rajan (1993), Suvendrini Perera (1994) and Kalpana Ram (Ram and Jolly 1998). Among the criticisms such women of colour make against white feminist agendas are: that the struggle against sexism has not been allied to the struggle against racism; that women of colour are treated only as victims, as having no agency; and that their perspective is not presented as having any wisdom to contribute to all women. They urge that, if categories of inequality are to be effectively engaged with, then Women’s Studies will need to examine the interconnections of “race,” ethnicity, class and sexuality. The responses of white feminists have been slow in coming, though a study by Chilla Bulbeck (1998) in Australia makes a substantive contribution (see also Brook, 1998: 51-53).

Returning to Turtle Beach, all authorial goodwill notwithstanding, a deeply unsatisfactory pair of texts will be shown to have been engendered in a specifically Australian way. Our critique will suggest that the texts distort and are reductionist, especially in their outlooks on language and culture, and exemplify a wider reductionism in Australian attitudes towards Asia, echoing the real world vicissitudes. We will suggest that an active, contestative approach to reading, modified from the subversive strategies outlined in Zawiah Yalha (1993; 1994), should be employed against such writing. This approach to reading (enhanced by linguistic methodology) and D’Cruz’s theory of culture constitute the tools of analysis to be used.

What counts in this novel is not so much the plot as the opportunities it provides for ostensible snapshots of Malaysian social and cultural institutions, and of the behaviour of Asians and Australians, especially towards one another. The presentation of all this turns out to be tendentiously and spuriously post-colonial in an Australian way. Certain patterns become apparent in Turtle Beach that, in the light of the rest of our book, are recognisably Australian. Also important is the amount of direct speech and near-direct speech, presenting the snapshot-like effect that tends to conceal the single organising consciousness behind the presentations.
The Film, the Book and the Quasi-Documentary Method

There are a number of overt parallels between Judith Wilkes, narrator of and character in Turtle Beach, and Blanche d’Alpuget herself. Judith Wilkes is a journalist who was in Kuala Lumpur at the time of the 1969 riots and returns 11 years later to report on “the refugee story.” Blanche d’Alpuget was a journalist who was in Malaysia in 1969 (although she was there accompanying her spouse rather than as a journalist) and who returned 11 years later to research Turtle Beach. Judith Wilkes, as we will see, combines a deeply rooted sense of Australian superiority (of which she is entirely unconscious) with a carefully emphasised veneer of overt cultural relativism, and d’Alpuget herself, apparently oblivious to the fact that Turtle Beach is clearly an accusation of human rights abuses against Malaysia, is reported as saying “Australians are wrong to accuse Indonesia and Malaysia of human rights abuses while ignoring their own towards Aborigines and minority ethnic groups” (Sunday Herald Sun 15 March 1992: 11).

D’Alpuget bases the novel’s credibility on the power of the eye-witness report rather more than on any suggested local expertise.11 This position sets her work apart from that of Conrad, Maugham and Burgess, where readers are much more aware of an organising consciousness interposing between themselves and the world “out there.” Furthermore, Conrad’s magisterial control of his text is always evident; he makes no attempt to write “from within” native characters (unlike Burgess and d’Alpuget). There is really little risk of the reader viewing Conrad as an innocent and artless filter of reality. The sophisticated reader may be able to suspend disbelief, but will be aware of doing so. Although not a fantasy, the obviously “wrought” element of Conrad distances and abstracts the text from lived experience. In the Turtle Beach texts, proper names (of places and people) and actual contemporary dates are consistently used (this much is consistent with The Malay Trillogy (1956-1959)) but it is above all the paratactic and dialogic documentary narrative style in the novel Turtle Beach that foreshadows the film and clinches the innocent sensory accuracy of the text for the reader, thereby enabling both inaccuracy and evaluation to be slipped under the reader’s guard. Regarding the second point, consider a section of text close to the beginning of the novel, where the narrator presents her experience of the 1969 race riots in Kuala Lumpur (3-4). The reportage of the style is clinched early in each paragraph, with simple sensory accounts. “White headbands,” “flat-bladed parangs” and “sharpened bamboos” are not only what the narrator ostensibly saw, they are described with a kind of flat immediacy that blends for the reader the world seen with the words describing it, hiding the interposition of the author in the process. The second paragraph is even balder: “The city smelt bad.” The very inadequacy of the writing in literary terms helps promote an illusion of reductionist objectivity. Not only did the writer actually smell this, but the smell (the reasons for it being given) is reified to the extent that the reader loses an identifiable “point of view,” overlooks the evaluative (“bad”) component, and believes that anyone else present must have perceived it exactly the same way. Both paragraphs include early quantification (“as many as five hundred at a time,” “after four days”), another journalistic stock-in-trade to enhance the credibility of reports. The only long subordinate clause (“who had brought”) is set apart from its framing sentence by dashes. The “constructed” nature of the text is further obscured by the interpolation of “people said” within commas in the middle of the clause, and by the listing of the three “by” phrases thereafter as three ostensibly direct impressions with no conjunctive structure at all. Together, these elements have the effect of immediate, rather breathless, almost random reporting, true because the evidence was seen, heard and smelt.

However, into this framework of reportage are slotted two grossly evaluative sequences: the metaphorical ascription of animalistic characteristics to both Malays (bees) and Chinese (pigs) in the first paragraph (a recurring theme of the book); and the judgement that the Malaysian leaders had lied. The bee metaphor hides behind what was heard; the pig behind what was said; as such, the reader
is easily misled into overlooking the metaphorical element altogether and reading the ascriptions as more “real world” impressions, concrete, tangible and effectively unmediated. The reader will not so much suspend disbelief as simply believe. Similarly, “Their leaders had lied” is expressed with the baldness of the sensory reporting that precedes it, and thus invites the reader to accept an evaluative explanation as a sensory report. Of course, the opinion presented happens to be grossly biased in view of the presuppositions it contains: that the leaders knew the Malaysian peoples could not live harmoniously (false belief), that those peoples could not in fact live together harmoniously (factual falsity), and that the leaders intended to deceive their people (as opposed to any intention of encouraging them to live together harmoniously).12 The bias as such is not the crucial issue, but rather the factor that encourages the reader to leave that bias unexamined: that is, the presentation of a view abstracted from reality in exactly the same way as a view reflective of it in a direct, concrete, sensory way. Just as Ong (1982: 11), among others, describes radio, television and so forth as phenomena of “secondary orality,” dependent on the presence of literacy for their existence, so we would see the presence of the quasi-documentary text as symptomatic of a kind of secondary concreteness, whereby at a certain level of societal abstraction the awareness of one’s own remove from the concrete is lost; the abstract is presented as if it were the concrete.

This leaves the question of why the historical record is as it is. The novel Turtle Beach attracted little attention in Malaysia when it appeared in 1980, while the 1992 film drew immediate Malaysian protests, particularly about the refugee-hacking scene. This does not indicate that the novel, as Salleh Ben Joned magnanimously supposes, is “a respectable work of fiction” that has been crudely sensationalised by the film (1994: 170). For one thing, d’Alpuget unambiguously endorsed the filmed version, and for another, the novel repeatedly hints at such massacres taking place. However, the novel cannot show us refugees being hacked to pieces. As the late director Andrey Tarkovsky (1986) points out, “Cinema lives by its capacity to resurrect the same event on the screen time after time” (140). He also observed that the script of the film is no more than “an account of something seen related to a blind man” (134). In other words, the power of film creates a sense of the historical record’s being captured by some “objective eye,” a power that cannot be matched even by novels such as Turtle Beach that mimic film technique. Accordingly, if the quasi-documentary novel and film both abuse their power, the effect of the abuse will be greater in the latter case because the power itself is greater. The sense of increased power may in turn, it is true, lead the creator into greater intentional abuse; there is some sensationalisation in the Turtle Beach film, as Ben Joned suggests.

These increased abuses lie both in the insertion of unwelcome metaphor under the guise of naïve presentation of lived experience, and in the violation of sensory knowledge, with the two often intertwined. So, for instance, the film shows us a grotesquely toad-like Malay prince boogying to rock music in gold chains and platform-soled shoes. The (metaphorical) animalism of the prince may well be less likely to be challenged when presented as a visual reflection of reality rather than as a written comparison, although audience studies on such matters are rather rudimentary. A violation of sensory knowledge, though, cannot possibly be challenged by those who have no idea they are being misled; and the speed and apparent authenticity of visually presented material allows no time for such ideas to arise. For example, we have it from a Malay source that the platform soles strain credibility in the context; they not only contribute to the construction of an unsavoury metaphor, they violate sensory knowledge. It is the latter that a naïve audience is unable to challenge; it became clear from surveys of cinema audiences that viewers of Turtle Beach believed that massacres of refugees on the beaches of Malaysia did quite definitely take place (The Australian, 20 March 1992: 4). The presentation of this is a lie in the full sense. The authors of the lie could reasonably be expected to have known nobody
The Film, the Book and the Quasi-Documentary Method

There are a number of overt parallels between Judith Wilkes, narrator of and character in Turtle Beach, and Blanche d’Alpuget herself. Judith Wilkes is a journalist who was in Kuala Lumpur at the time of the 1969 riots and returns 11 years later to report on “the refugee story.” Blanche d’Alpuget was a journalist who was in Malaysia in 1969 (although she was there accompanying her spouse rather than as a journalist) and who returned 11 years later to research Turtle Beach. Judith Wilkes, as we will see, combines a deeply rooted sense of Australian superiority (of which she is entirely unconscious) with a carefully emphasised veneer of overt cultural relativism, and d’Alpuget herself, apparently oblivious to the fact that Turtle Beach is clearly an accusation of human rights abuses against Malaysia, is reported as saying “Australians are wrong to accuse Indonesia and Malaysia of human rights abuses while ignoring their own towards Aborigines and minority ethnic groups” (Sunday Herald Sun 15 March 1992: 11).

D’Alpuget bases the novel’s credibility on the power of the eye-witness report rather more than on any suggested local expertise. This position sets her work apart from that of Conrad, Maugham and Burgess, where readers are much more aware of an organising consciousness interposing between themselves and the world “out there.” Furthermore, Conrad’s magisterial control of his text is always evident; he makes no attempt to write “from within” native characters (unlike Burgess and d’Alpuget). There is really little risk of the reader viewing Conrad as an innocent and artless filter of reality. The sophisticated reader may be able to suspend disbelief, but will be aware of doing so. Although not a fantasy, the obviously “wrought” element of Conrad distances and abstracts the text from lived experience. In the Turtle Beach texts, proper names (of places and people) and actual contemporary dates are consistently used (this much is consistent with The Malayan Trilogy (1956-1959)) but it is above all the paratactic and dialogic documentary narrative style in the novel Turtle Beach that foreshadows the film and clinches the innocent sensory accuracy of the text for the reader, thereby enabling both inaccuracy and evaluation to be slipped under the reader’s guard. Regarding the second point, consider a section of text close to the beginning of the novel, where the narrator presents her experience of the 1969 race riots in Kuala Lumpur (3-4). The reportage of the style is clinched early in each paragraph, with simple sensory accounts. “White headbands,” “flat-bladed parangs” and “sharpened bamboos” are not only what the narrator ostensibly saw, they are described with a kind of flat immediacy that blends for the reader the world seen with the words describing it, hiding the interposition of the author in the process. The second paragraph is even balder: “The city smelt bad.” The very inadequacy of the writing in literary terms helps promote an illusion of reductionist objectivity. Not only did the writer actually smell this, but the smell (the reasons for it being given) is reified to the extent that the reader loses an identifiable “point of view,” overlooks the evaluative (“bad”) component, and believes that anyone else present must have perceived it exactly the same way. Both paragraphs include early quantification (“as many as five hundred at a time,” “after four days”), another journalistic stock-in-trade to enhance the credibility of reports. The only long subordinate clause (“who had brought”) is set apart from its framing sentence by dashes. The “constructed” nature of the text is further obscured by the interpolation of “people said” within commas in the middle of the clause, and by the listing of the three “by” phrases thereafter as three ostensibly direct impressions with no conjunctive structure at all. Together, these elements have the effect of immediate, rather breathless, almost random reporting, true because the evidence was seen, heard and smelt.

However, into this framework of reportage are slotted two grossly evaluative sequences: the metaphorical ascription of animalistic characteristics to both Malays (bees) and Chinese (pigs) in the first paragraph (a recurring theme of the book); and the judgement that the Malaysian leaders had lied. The bee metaphor hides behind what was heard; the pig behind what was said; as such, the reader
is easily misled into overlooking the metaphorical element altogether and reading the ascriptions as more "real world" impressions, concrete, tangible and effectively unmediated. The reader will not so much suspend disbelief as simply believe. Similarly, "Their leaders had lied" is expressed with the baldness of the sensory reporting that precedes it, and thus invites the reader to accept an evaluative explanation as a sensory report. Of course, the opinion presented happens to be grossly biased in view of the presuppositions it contains: that the leaders knew the Malaysian peoples could not live harmoniously (false belief), that those peoples could not in fact live together harmoniously (factual falsity), and that the leaders intended to deceive their people (as opposed to any intention of encouraging them to live together harmoniously). The bias as such is not the crucial issue, but rather the factor that encourages the reader to leave that bias unexamined: that is, the presentation of a view abstracted from reality in exactly the same way as a view reflective of it in a direct, concrete, sensory way. Just as Ong (1982: 11), among others, describes radio, television and so forth as phenomena of "secondary orality," dependent on the presence of literacy for their existence, so we would see the presence of the quasi-documentary text as symptomatic of a kind of secondary concreteness, whereby at a certain level of societal abstraction the awareness of one's own remove from the concrete is lost; the abstract is presented as if it were the concrete.

This leaves the question of why the historical record is as it is. The novel Turtle Beach attracted little attention in Malaysia when it appeared in 1980, while the 1992 film drew immediate Malaysian protests, particularly about the refugee-hacking scene. This does not indicate that the novel, as Salleh Ben Joned magnanimously supposes, is "a respectable work of fiction" that has been cruelly sensationalised by the film (1994: 170). For one thing, d'Alpuget unambiguously endorsed the filmed version, and for another, the novel repeatedly hints at such massacres taking place. However, the novel cannot show us refugees being hacked to pieces. As the late director Andrey Tarkovsky (1986) points out, "Cinema lives by its capacity to resurrect the same event on the screen time after time" (140). He also observed that the script of the film is no more than "an account of something seen related to a blind man." In other words, the power of film creates a sense of the historical record's being captured by some "objective eye," a power that cannot be matched even by novels such as Turtle Beach that mimic film technique. Accordingly, if the quasi-documentary novel and film both abuse their power, the effect of the abuse will be greater in the latter case because the power itself is greater. The sense of increased power may in turn, it is true, lead the creator into greater intentional abuse; there is some sensationalisation in the Turtle Beach film, as Ben Joned suggests.

These increased abuses lie both in the insertion of unwelcome metaphor under the guise of naive presentation of lived experience, and in the violation of sensory knowledge, with the two often intertwined. So, for instance, the film shows us a grotesquely toad-like Malay prince boogieing to rock music in gold chains and platform-soled shoes. The (metaphorical) animalism of the prince may well be less likely to be challenged when presented as a visual reflection of reality rather than as a written comparison, although audience studies on such matters are rather rudimentary. A violation of sensory knowledge, though, cannot possibly be challenged by those who have no idea they are being misled; and the speed and apparent authenticity of visually presented material allows no time for such ideas to arise. For example, we have it from a Malay source that the platform soles strain credibility in the context; they not only contribute to the construction of an unsavoury metaphor, they violate sensory knowledge. It is the latter that a naive audience is unable to challenge; it became clear from surveys of cinema audiences that viewers of Turtle Beach believed that massacres of refugees on the beaches of Malaysia did quite definitely take place (The Australian, 20 March 1992: 4). The presentation of this is a lie in the full sense. The authors of the lie could reasonably be expected to have known nobody
saw such a massacre. Nobody, in fact, did see such a massacre, and the intention was to deceive the audience into believing a fact that was false both because nobody saw the massacre happen and because presenting it as if it did occur foists a picture of Malay barbarity on the unsuspecting audience. Had sensory knowledge not been violated, the vision of barbarity would have been harder to construct in the first place, and easier for an audience to deconstruct even if it had been constructed. And when, in the book, an Anglo-Australian (and thus inherently believable) character says, in direct speech unincorporated into narrative, “Jesus Christ, that was where they stoned a whole boatload in January. The ones who weren’t dead they threw back to drown” (Turtle Beach 216), the intention and effect are essentially the same as in the film. Again, the presentation is a lie, albeit via a less powerful medium.

In this context, however, we must add that there is evidence that some refugee boats were turned away from the Malaysian coast, resulting in the almost certain loss of lives. Valerie Sutter (1990) says:

The arrival of the Hai Hong, a freighter carrying over 2,500 refugees, in November, 1978, was considered a flashpoint (…) prompting a hard-line refugee policy. This policy refused refugee boats permission to land in Malaysia, and the Malaysian navy simply towed approaching boats out to sea. (133-134)

We would not want to glorify or even condone this, but such a policy was in force for barely six months (up to the July 1979 Geneva Conference), and Malaysia’s position that, not having been involved in the Vietnam War, it should not be responsible for the aftermath, is surely not without point. This is not to suggest that refugees, in general, are not an international responsibility. However, this does not amount to an equal moral imposition on each and every nation to share the burden of any particular crisis. Of relevance here are both implication in the genesis of a problem and possession of the means to assist with a situation. Anyway, such practices are not equivalent to the orgy of violent hatred described in Turtle Beach. Confronted with a much more limited number of boat-borne asylum seekers, Australia has turned many back to uncertain fates in their countries of origin after protracted periods of mandatory detention that have been repeatedly questioned in the courts. The unfolding “Tampa crisis” of 2001 again involved retrospective legislative change.

Anyway, there is no question but that the allusion to and presentation of massacres on the beaches of Malaysia in Turtle Beach is a violation of sensory knowledge (commonly known as “fact”), which is combined crucially with the construction and authorisation of oppressive “truth,” and with the assumption of a Western audience in all its ignorance of the “facts” and its prior “knowledge” of at least one officially approved “truth,” the previously mentioned “superiority of being us.” And this violation of sensory knowledge, this lie, is what the formerly colonised party instinctively rises up against.

“Foreigner Talk”/Attitudes to Language: Inaccuracy, Metaphor and Language

The term “Foreigner Talk,” coined by Ferguson (1971), has been used to refer to the linguistic register/used by native speakers to communicate with foreigners or purportedly to mimic their peculiarities, with the line between the two often being blurred. In its negative “talking down” sense, Foreigner Talk is a convenient appellation for the use of non-standard language (in this case, English), not in a celebratory, sympathetic or even neutral way, but so that the non-standard language itself and its speakers are rendered inadequate and ridiculous versions of their standard counterparts (rather than existing in their own right). If an author is unable or unwilling to listen to the non-standard version carefully enough to produce a version in keeping with what its speakers actually say and hear, then her or his sympathy must certainly be called into question. Typically, Foreigner Talk violations of accuracy are reductionist: one or two features of the non-standard language are laboured incessantly, while the
vast bulk of its phonological, syntactic, semantic and lexical features are ignored, with sentences being typically simplified and a great deal of naturally occurring words simply omitted. The overall effect is one of caricature. Again the lie component is crucial and is what the victims cry out against. As the young Vietnamese-Australian actor and playwright Tony Le Nguyen, in the Herald-Sun (5 September 1995) has complained about Anglo-Australian film dialogue for Vietnamese actors: “When they write lines for Vietnamese actors they leave out every second word, which isn’t the way we speak!” (43).

This kind of reductionism abounds in Turtle Beach. To illustrate how the reader is positioned through such inaccuracy, consider the following: Malaysian Indian English (see Turtle Beach 121, 142, 143, 151-152); Malay English (see Turtle Beach 137); Malaysian Chinese English (see Turtle Beach 74-75, 80, 83, 106, 158-159); Minou’s English (Vietnamese-French influenced, ostensibly, see Turtle Beach 190-191); indeterminable variety spoken to Judith on Bidong (see Turtle Beach 195-196). Putting “reduced” language into the mouths of the speakers of English as a second language has a number of effects. The fact that all the Englishes spoken have the admixture of some bizarre feature implies the unsuccessful imitation of standard English rather than the existence of any Malaysian version(s) of English as such. The existence and vibrancy of Malaysian English is in little doubt judging by the successful Fourth International Conference in August 1997 held in Kuala Lumpur, sponsored jointly by the Malaysian Association of Modern Languages and the Macquarie Dictionary, on the theme “English is an Asian language: the Malaysian context.” Here though the West is the yardstick; the Indian speaks in a Cambridge voice, but why should he do so any more than a Cantabrigian should speak in an Indian voice? (see Turtle Beach 121). Phonetically, there is no reason why the latter should not be as valid a description as the former. Politically, of course, the Asian version must pass (or rather fail—“Isn’t it?”) muster against the British rather than the other way round. The depiction reinforces the notion that all those who are not Anglo-Saxon desperately want to be; and the effect could not be achieved without author and audience ignoring certain facts of Malaysian English, in particular a unique syntax and lexis that make it clear that Malaysian English simply exists in its own right, and is not a (failed) version of anything. Such facts include, for example, the use of “already” rather than past tense morphology (endings such as “-ed” in “walked” or suppletive forms such as “came”) to show completion (Platt et al., 1984: 70-71), the use of “one” instead of “a” where something is previously unknown to the listener (Platt et al., 1984: 57); “friend” as a verb (Platt et al., 1984: 99); and such idioms as “to shake legs” (meaning “to be idle” and “in lips and bounce” (Platt et al., 1984: 108). However, such a faithful representation of Malaysian speech would put Anglo-Australian readers in the perhaps uncomfortable position of needing to make an effort to understand. Communication cannot really take place, a whole set of insulting assumptions about the more abstract Anglo-Australian reader’s capacity to resonate with somebody else’s concreteness cannot be jettisoned, if only “official truth” is presented with the usual crucial support of violations of sensory knowledge.

As represented in Turtle Beach, the bizarre ways in which Malaysian English fails to replicate Anglo-Australian English successfully are clearly differentiated depending on ethnic origin. The specificities all show Chinese Malaysian English failing through reduction (fewer words than would be used in Australian English), and Indian Malaysian English failing through embellishment (correspondingly more words). This is entirely counterfactual. For example, the use of “isn’t it?” as a universal tag question, and the use of statements as questions are characteristics of Malaysian English in general (Platt et al., 1984: 127-129), not merely of Malaysian Indian English and Malaysian Chinese English respectively. Heavy use of the present progressive tense is not characteristic of Malaysian English at all. It is characteristic of Indian English, but to ascribe it to Malaysian Indians is to suggest
not only that they can never succeed in speaking English correctly, but also that the particular way in which they will fail (which, we notice, does not vary from individual to individual) is somehow borne in their genes from India (this also leads to a stress on physical appearance as an index of tribal identity and suppressor of individuality). In fact, inasmuch as there are differences between the Malaysian English used by the different ethnic groups, these are differences only on the phonological level, and enhance, if anything, the overall sense of collective identity reflected in the substantially unitary Malaysian English phenomenon. An ethnographic study of code and style choice in Malaysian business settings by Shanta Nair-Venugopal (1997) indicates that a pan-Malaysian or collective identity is evident in the spoken variety of Malaysian English as the prevailing sociolect of Malaysian speakers of English. In one particular case d’Alpuget misleads her readership in the opposite direction; the interpolation of “la” is a characteristic of Malaysian English, but it is difficult to discern why a French-Vietnamese woman who had apparently learned English in Australia would present this characteristic after only a few months in Malaysia. Finally, an Asian speaker of English who does *prima facie* succeed in mastering Anglo-Australian idiom (if that is one’s definition of success), is just as unacceptable and ridiculous for having succeeded as others are for failing (see Turtle Beach 195-196).

It is hard to avoid levelling the charge of racism against the final example; the intention is to derive humour not only from the inappropriate use of broad Australian idiom to a female journalist but also from the (perceived) incongruity of a Vietnamese-Australian speaking thus. In other words, the acceptable versions of English are owned by whites, and non-white speakers who actually master these versions are not clever or competent but merely thieves, who (as is the lot of thieves) will not be able to wear their stolen garments quite as do those who are born to them. Again, a violation of sensory knowledge (we would defy the author to find anyone who would speak remotely like the Vietnamese engineer after only seven years in Australia) is used to reinforce an official truth (Asians don’t get it right even when they get it right). In the other cases cited in the paragraph above, too, d’Alpuget’s fast and loose play with linguistic fact has definite political effects. The emphasis on the differentiation of versions of Malaysian English along ethnic lines reinforces the authorial contention that the three major Malaysian ethnic groups are totally divided and cannot live together or find common communicative ground. It also positions them as exhibits for the amusement and gratification of Anglo-Australians rather than as a community in their own right, with their own centration and substantially shared raison d’être. Finally, the combination of both over-particularisation and over-generalisation of linguistic phenomena carries a balance of distinct yet related metaphors (to be discussed at length below) ascribed to various Asian ethnicities. The Indian may be mystical where the Chinese is mechanical, yet both are detached, and all, even Minou, “break” their sentences with “la,” as Turtle Beach puts it. The pattern of ascription suggests that there are both ethnic and pan-Asian characteristics, but no national ones, which is of course very convenient for the portrayal of Malaysia as a conglomeration of murderously warring tribes.

From the above examples, we can see that in Turtle Beach the native voice is not silenced through not being there. Ostensible native voices abound, but they are systematically distorted and rendered ridiculous as the author, defying sensory knowledge, tells her own tale as would a ventriloquist through Asian mouthpieces. What sympathy or expertise should we ascribe to an author too unresponsive to listen and/or too colonising to give space to what is heard? For the Anglo-Australian readership, this is hardly easy to work out, because received official wisdom concurs with the picture being presented with all the (in the information age not inconsiderable) authority of the journalist; insofar as there is received official wisdom at all. So, for example, Stephen Frost reports that his Australian undergraduate students watched the television series Embassy "because it was one of the few Australian television
shows that was both situated in Asia and dealt with issues relevant to the region” (194). Other Australian material dealing with Asia has been equally thin on the ground. The Australian-Malaysian controversy surrounding Embassy is by no means unlike the Turtle Beach one. Both texts produce colonialist ascriptions under the cover of ostensible postcolonialism and with the seal (perhaps less grotesquely unjustified in the case of Embassy) of journalistic accuracy and reliability. This mixture, foisted on an audience that has lacked alternative sources of information, is characteristic of Australian representations of Asia in general, including in the political sphere.

We should note that nowhere in Turtle Beach is there any admiring comment on the facility with which the Asian characters speak English, despite the fact that they all demonstrate—even with their words mauled by d’Alpuget—control of a second or third language extraordinary by Anglo-Australian standards. Indeed, the portrayal of their English as risible may be in part a defensive measure against their unknown and threatening first languages. Anglo-Australia still tends to demand ethnic and linguistic uniformity, even if a little less forthrightly than Prime Minister Billy Hughes did. Consider the passage on Minou from the point of view of Hobday, the Australian High Commissioner (see Turtle Beach 161).

“The thing” in question there would appear to be a sexual act; in the film Turtle Beach, Minou is shown riding Hobday and gradually lowering her head as if about to perform oral sex. In any case, all sexual acts between Hobday and Minou seem illicit, the marriage bond notwithstanding, as we learn very early in the book that Hobday has abandoned the former Anglo-respectable Lady Hobday (who subsequently commits suicide) in order to “run off with an Asian dolly,” as Judith’s husband Richard puts it (Turtle Beach 10). In addition, when visiting Minou in Canberra, Judith had been let in by a young Asian man who “then went back to what looked like a furtive attempt to disguise events of a recent and unusual wantonness” (Turtle Beach 35), and Minou had shown Judith pornography (Turtle Beach 36-37). Here, such disrespectful sex is compared directly with “being ‘oriental’” and, more specifically, with speaking Cantonese. This bizarre connection between languages other than English and forbidden sex is not a one-off.

Aside from the notion that one “breaks” into a language other than English, with its implication of loss of control, it is specifically in a sexual context that the breakdown takes place. The language other than English may be alluring from a Catholic priest or an Asian woman; from Anglo-Australians, it is too clever by half and deeply suspicious (Turtle Beach 285). Ralph, it turns out, speaks Vietnamese and Cantonese; and, in line with the languages other than English-sex nexus, is having an illicit affair with a Vietnamese-Chinese refugee on Bidong.

Recapitulating, then, we see that for the Australian characters languages other than English are mysterious and best left alone; the Australian’s position is facilitated by Asians who, apparently in envy of Anglo-Saxons, preferentially speak versions of English that, while always indicating aspirations to a pure white variety (whether Cambridge or Newcastle), inevitably fall short in ways that typically are differentiated according to ethnic descent. This points to several underpinning concept metaphors—deep in the sense that they are never stated—that govern the pattern of characteristic ascriptions to Asians in Turtle Beach. Thus, metaphorically, imitation stands for envy and imperfect imitation is incompetence. Crucially, because of the counterfactual linguistic data, envy of Anglo-Saxons and ultimate incompetence is resolutely ascribed to Asians in Turtle Beach. By another unstated metaphor, what you look like (the sum of your genetic descent) is what you are (in terms of group identification). Accordingly, certain linguistic (and other) characteristics are ascribed to all Asians, as they all look more or less different from Anglo-Australians. Other characteristics are ascribed to Malays, Indians or Chinese, who all look more or less different from each other. Malaysians, who do not form
a genetic group, have nothing ascribed to them as such and are thus not a viable nation; but this thesis could hardly have been carried if the linguistic evidence had been presented in line with sensory knowledge. Thus, (inaccurate) linguistic data is crucial not only to the ascriptions themselves, which are inextricably bound up with form and content of language, but also to justifying the groups selected for the ascription of characteristics in the first place.

Ascribed Characteristics and Underlying Metaphors

The selection of ethnic groups or Asians in general (as opposed to the Western norm of nationalities and individuals) as the basis for ascriptions is itself an act of ascription with political and cultural meaning. From the point of view of a more abstract cultural orientation (the author’s), the relative lack of stress on the individual (which Minou’s self-sacrifice is supposed to illustrate) in Asia is very striking; so the text paints with an overbroad brush and suppresses Asian individuality altogether. The emphasis on ethnicity, and suppression of nationality, reinforces the notion that the Malaysian polity is a house divided; but such an emphasis also has a more basic role, as we shall see. For the moment though, we observe how the (counterfactual) linguistic data supports and is supported by an Orientalist structuring of personal appearance and ways of looking. The distinction is that in the latter case we cannot talk of violations of sensory knowledge; the ease or otherwise of distinguishing different ethnicities and individuals is not a matter of fact. (This is not to detract at all from the importance of inaccuracies, particularly linguistic ones, in upholding the overall cultural and political ascription patterns involved.) A close reading also reveals that even Minou admitted the difficulties of distinguishing Hoa from non-Hoa, “a Chinese or Vietnamese,” by appearance (see Turtle Beach 195-196). Why should this be an admission, why should distinguishing two ethnicities by appearance be easy, why should specifically racial (as opposed to national or even linguistic) terms be used? The Orientalist nature of the relentless drive for ethnic categorisation can be grasped by transposing Turtle Beach’s characters to a European scenario. We would hardly read, “A Czech or Hungarian—it was difficult to tell the difference—was approaching them. Everyone, even Judith, admitted that few could distinguish by appearance Magyar from non-Magyar.”

In addition, Asian characters are repeatedly depicted as knowing, or looking as if they know, things by non-rational means, while demonstrating, usually again through their way of looking, their complete incomprehension of the obvious. Under this general rubric there are particular characteristics of the ascriptions to the different ethnicities. In the case of the Chinese, knowledge (turning to incomprehension if challenged) appears to stem from some mixture of instinct and habituation (see Turtle Beach 80, 158-159). We also see it in extracts not linked explicitly to language (see Turtle Beach 59).19

There is another group that Anglo-Saxons customarily classify according to breeding, in which they rarely recognise individuality, and to which they ascribe knowledge (and gaps in it) on the basis of instinct and habituation. This group is animals, in particular domestic animals. Given the group divisions we have seen so far, it should not be very surprising that a metaphorical equivalence between Asians and animals, and with it an ascription of animalistic characteristics to Asians, runs deeply through Turtle Beach.

Asians are animals in appearance (see Turtle Beach 100, 205, 211, 226, 234, 253, 267), behaviour (see Turtle Beach 144, 151, 194, 202, 213), and a selection of extracts related to language and other vocalisation; notice that a language other than English appears to be animal talk, even where used by an Anglo-Australian (see Turtle Beach 74, 78, 79, 99, 159, 171-172, 190, 198, 229-230, 234, 264). We
have already commented on the Malay “bees” calling the Chinese “pigs” in the 1969 riots; but such equivalences are by no means limited to overtly negative incidents. For instance, at one point Minou “had pushed her forehead into Judith’s shoulder, as a dog will comfort its owner with a caress” (Turtle Beach 253). We also have cases, straddling the categories of appearance and behaviour, of a “Sikh doctor, a man of bovine calm” (Turtle Beach 91) and of Malay men at a royal party who “gave their knowing frog-prince smiles” (Turtle Beach 133). The sheer number of references clinches the strength of the equivalence.

Aside from being a colonising device, the pattern of animal ascription supports the colonising categorisation—ethnic or pan-Asian, but not national or individual—noted already. While animals are pan-Asian, the species involved tend decidedly towards ethno-specificity. Chinese are geese (men) or ducks (women and children). Indians are larger waterfowl or beasts. Note that this pairs neatly with the allegedly reduced or embellished natures of Chinese and Indian Malaysian English respectively (and thus ultimately ties in with counterfactual reporting). Either Malays or Chinese can be monkeys; Chinese or Vietnamese can be dogs; but only Malays are frogs. Bees, however, appear cross-ethnically wherever there is emphasis on the suppression of individuality.

In Turtle Beach, the Judith/narrator/d’Alpugur figure is suffused with compassion towards animals (whether zoological or anthropological), in the best Anglo-memsahib tradition; the problem is that the animals are so beastly to each other. Susanna Checkets in a personal communication emphasises the pervasive animality of the text in general, drawing our attention to 31 cases where Anglo-Australian characters are (with varying degrees of directness) compared with animals—and a 32nd botanical instance where Judith feels “mindless as an anemone” (Turtle Beach 34). However, Anglo-Australian anthropological animals tend to be higher species and/or more in control of the situation than their Asian counterparts; of the 31 cases, there are eight dog metaphors, three horses, three pigs, two undefined hunting animals, two undefined quadrupeds, two cats, a bear, a fox, a tiger, a python, and a queen bee (Judith!). There is a significant pattern here, and the animals tend to behave in a dominant and (re)active way (more often seen as defensive than aggressive). Judith and Richard exchange “snaps and snarls” (Turtle Beach 49), Judith “felt her hackles rising” (Turtle Beach 53), while a certain “old Crabbe-Wallace” cocks an eyebrow “as briskly as a dog cocking its leg” (Turtle Beach 179).

So, while it is true that Anglo-Australians are themselves not entirely exempted from being (beastly) animals, the weight of evidence points to Asian anthropological animals being both more beastly and (in line with the complete absence of abstraction ascribed to Asian cultures) completely unaware of it. Again, through ridicule of language that is ostensibly reported photo-journalistically, a culture is portrayed in which killing is carried on under the rubric of care (with a hint of the bordello). It can be noted here parenthetically that the indulgent English attitude to animals, which finds an Australian incarnation in Judith, who “would rave at the children for pulling the legs off grasshoppers and cried when the cat killed an owl” (Turtle Beach 34), is not necessarily the last word in compassion and may be hypocritical. Rates of vegetarianism, for example, do not seem to be affected by this Anglo cultural trait. Besides, compassion for “harmless” animals can (and in Judith’s case does) stand in the way of the more difficult act of compassion for humans, especially those who challenge us through their difference: “You could talk to any animal, she’d discovered in childhood. You only had to wish them well, and they responded [. . .]” (Turtle Beach 80). Of course, communication with creatures that do not answer back is much less stressful.

Leaving animals for now, unindividuated knowledge ascribable to instinct and habituation, and the authorial urge to shape and control Asian characters, is associated with two other central metaphors: the Asian as machine and the Asian as child. The doll motif, aside from indicating a grossly stereotypical
A depiction of the ethnic Chinese, also represents a kind of grotesque Freudian slip. All the characters are dolls in the sense that they represent mouthpieces for the crudely differentiated voices of the author/narrator, and puppets for the instantiation of her actions. While all writers control their characters in a sense, this enterprise is different for its quasi-documentary immediacy technique ("Judith noticed," "Judith thought"), and so cannot be explained away as grand opera, as d'Alpuget represented it. We are given the impression that the mechanical nature of the Chinese is a directly-reported, sensed truth. (Again there is a direct parallel in this regard the impression the narrative makes and the author's perception of her own technique. In Blanche d'Alpuget: Wrestling with the angel (1995), she states that she is the kind of writer who just goes out and writes down what she sees.) Not only are the Chinese compared with dolls, but given their lack of normal bodily functions (Turtle Beach 208) and their acts of clackety-clacking (Turtle Beach 82) and jabbing (Turtle Beach 53), given that their hands perform actions apparently independently of central nervous control (Turtle Beach 81), we can say that simile has mounted to metaphor and they are dolls. This irritates Judith; perfect imitation by the colonised can be a source of annoyance to the coloniser, who may feel that if perfection comes from the other quarter it cannot possibly be natural. Important in the context of this "post-colonialist" writing is, the simultaneous (apparently enlightened) acknowledgment of racism coupled with the extraordinarily lame and collusive excuse that "we" are all racist, making racism an inevitable (and thus not culpable) part of the human condition, or at least of the Australian one (see Turtle Beach 53). Colonialism is surely a more insidious condition when it masquerades as having seen through and replaced itself. That is why it is worrying when, as noted already, an Australian of expertise and goodwill such as Greg Sheridan sees the "race debate" in Australia as satisfactorily concluded.

Dolls are not only unnatural, they are also not grown up. Asians are children throughout the book; however, while the Chinese children are attenuated and mechanical dolls, the Indian ones are overblown and overgrown babies, and the Malays are guilty reckless and reckless kids (see Turtle Beach 52, 61, 71, 73, 76, 161, 168, 222, 225, 250, 285).

It is only a short step from conceiving of the Asian as a child to the overt placement of Asian cultures on a lower plane than, and backwards in time from, the Anglo-Australian one. The Chinese still, apparently, need to learn not to be incredibly dumb (Turtle Beach 79); yet, as children who have attained the status of machines, they are themselves on a somewhat higher plane than the Malays, who have not "learnt" optimism or the can-do mentality, as Judith comments when she reaches Kuala Trengganu (Turtle Beach 218). The Chinese are clearly on a different, and quite possibly higher, developmental plane than the Indians. Contrasts between indulgent babies and controlled machines tend to favour the latter. For example, release into "the glorious, airconditioned, efficient world of the Chinese business class" is something of an apotheosis after the Indians at Thaipusam, of whom Judith says "everything in excess for these people" (Turtle Beach 152). Points of development are easy to organise from a height.12.

The slightly different kinds of immaturity that Turtle Beach ascribes to the different ethnic groups has a corollary in distinct representations of sexual proclivities; combining the traditions of the Orientalist and the potboiler, the text constantly has recourse to sex, even to the extent of Hobday expatiating on the sex life of lilies (Turtle Beach 182-183). The Malays, feckless kids and brownskinned natives as they are perceived, are sexual predators. The "boy" pursues his interest in Judith to the extent of trying to bring her a drink 30 minutes later, despite her declining his offer, prompting her to put on the safety chain, whereupon she hears him "muttering nastily" (Turtle Beach 76). The Chinese, in keeping with their mechanical status and the stereotyped expectations of the Anglo-Australian reader, are entirely devoid of sex. The Indians, as great babies, are seen primarily as sexual beings that
are gratified and also gratify, but without proper masculine assertiveness. We read of Kanam’s effect on Judith, [...] he had enraptured her, as the truly beautiful can do. [...] your mind has stopped (Turtle Beach 260).

Here, the Australian is released from responsibility and rationality because she chooses not to perceive a threat. Indian sensuality is seen as largely metaphysical, and particularly feminine in a negative sense, insofar as it is physical (the description of the ecstasy of Thaipusam and the apparent sadomasochism of the rites fits this, being entirely out of keeping with the Anglo/colonial myth of masculine control).

Why are ethnic Indians particularly subject to disempowerment through feminisation? It is partly because a position as fully-blown androgynes (complete with homoerotic proclivity/appeal (see Turtle Beach 63, 203-204), is in keeping with the all-encompassing mystical wisdom they are supposed to possess (and which also disempowers them). Furthermore, sexless beings like the Chinese businessman cannot be seen as feminine, but merely as not masculine (willingness to cook, and a reasonable degree of competence at it, are commonly seen as unmasculine in the dominant Australian culture); and the Malays tend to be seen as too straightforwardly unsophisticated to cross the gender line, but still too immature and decadent to be “proper” men.

In Anglo-Australian culture it is entirely customary to represent women as lower down the animal scale than men—for example as “birds” or “pets” (for a discussion of this phenomenon in Australian newspapers, see Stirling 1987). Accordingly, representing Asian men as feminine disempowers, objectifies and belittles them as surely as the animal metaphor and the “waiting to be categorised” helplessness. What narrator and reader comfortably view as superior science, if not omniscience, is nothing but the construction of a world (under the guise of observation) in which no negotiation or understanding can take place, as there is no recognition of any possibility of prior misunderstanding that might call forth the effort required for negotiation and understanding. Unfortunately, as Ling (1995) points out, “There are perhaps few travellers content to soak in incomprehension and use travel for lessons they do not already know” (288). The armchair traveler reading Turtle Beach is taught with great conviction what s/he already knows, knowledge that unfortunately is always exploitative and colonist and often in violation of facts while parading its adherence to them. And one thing s/ he already knows, ironically, is that s/he is a morally relativistic post-colonialist.

**Minou: Asian Hero or Eugenicist Project?**

One of the pillars on which the ostensibly enlightened post-colonialist relativistic spirit of Turtle Beach rests is its balance of woman heroes, the Caucasian Judith and the Asian Minou. Minou’s suicide for her family’s sake is the culmination of Turtle Beach, from which Judith apparently learns, even though she had wanted to prevent it. This is particularly apparent in the film, at the end of which Judith is suddenly transformed from go-getting career woman and absent parent to a loving mother embracing her two little sons in a golden haze at some Australian airport. In the book, things are not quite so clear-cut. Events still progress from a situation where “She [Minou] liked her [Judith], and she didn’t like her. And the feeling was mutual” (Turtle Beach 112), to a conclusion where (with Minou safely dead) Judith, in the face of heavy sarcasm from her ex-husband Richard upon her return to Australia, can allow herself to think that she had loved Minou (Turtle Beach 279). Besides, in the body of the book, one page after Minou’s devotion to her children has been detailed by Hobday, Judith’s awkward relationship with one of her sons, whom she had wanted to abort, is presented in not too flattering counterpoint (Turtle Beach 187-188). Undoubtedly, “we” are now sensitively post-
colonial enough to realise "we" can even learn a little something from Asia.

However, so many qualifications have to be attached to the notion of Minou as the teacher of a lesson that ultimately she is as representative of Asian disempowerment as any phenomenon in the Turtle Beach texts. To start in the most general terms, it needs to be borne in mind that Minou’s sacrifice is presented as necessitated by Asian barbarity, both of the Malay villagers who slaughter the refugees and of Vietnam for impelling its Chinese minority to flee in the first place. The first barbarity needs no further comment. The second, however, at first glance appears to be presented in balance with Australian rejection of the refugees. The balance is more equal in the film than the book; in the former but not the latter, Kanar explicitly asks Judith, “And what is YOUR government doing about providing these refugees with their needs?” However, even this must be seen as an attack on government in general rather than on Australians; thus, Judith’s husband Richard (supposedly involved in the then left-leaning Australian Labor Party) cautions her to write in a way that will not create sympathy for the refugees in Australia (Turtle Beach 31). In other words, to achieve administrative efficiencies the Australian government needs to be shielded from the ready compassion of its people.

Turning from the wider political context of the “lesson” to its actual content, we find repeated the valuation of Asian knowledge and feeling outlined in the previous section: what at first glance is applauded reveals itself on closer inspection to be, at best, entirely one-sided because of the absence of any element of abstract thought or true (conscious) altruism. Ling describes the eponymous Asian figure witnessed in Broinowski’s The Yellow Lady (1992) as “a being with no reflection,” and this applies to Minou as much as to d’Alpugor’s other Asian characters (90). Minou acts as she must; as an “agent” she is entirely dependent on “revealed wisdom” beyond herself. She can follow no other path but to make the family paramount, as Ralph explained to Lan (Turtle Beach 90). She is single-minded because, as she explains, she has “a good purpose” to justify her existence, while Judith has “just a function” (Turtle Beach 199). True, Minou has attained that insight through thinking about why she is alive, but, having discovered (apparently without analysis) that she is alive in order to fulfill her purpose (to serve her family), she does not need to theorise that purpose nor even to think of her family, no matter how much she might act for them. She does not even need to think about the details of what to do; the I Ching tells her that, although she is portrayed as childishly re-throwing the coins if what they tell her is not to her liking (Turtle Beach 112-113).

It is immediately after Minou has left Hobday44 and Judith alone that Judith broaches the issue of having wanted one of her sons aborted (Turtle Beach 187-188). This section while apparently looking at Anglo-Australian family problems critically, in fact subtly undermines the worth of Minou’s apparently exemplary approach. However Judith and Hobday might have treated their families, they are the ones who can actually reflect, via the medium of self torment, on what they have done. It is true that guilt, with its reflexive focus on the individual psyche, is particularly characteristic of the more abstract society; but, as elsewhere in Turtle Beach, this germ of truth is a hook that lures the reader to wallow in an aggregation of inaccuracy and offensive metaphor.

Firstly Hobday urges Judith to do her job (to fulfil her function and earn her keep). Minou is scathing about this apparent purposelessness (Turtle Beach 199), but there is really no suggestion in the book that Judith should have done otherwise. The reader does not come away perceiving the decision to leave her children behind and work in Malaysia a journalist to have been a terrible mistake. In any case, had she not done her job as a journalist she would not have met Minou and learnt about the glory of filial piety. Secondly, self-torment represents a shared value between the two Anglo-Australians, which Minou as a concrete-oriented outsider is never allowed to understand; hence the relief when she leaves the room, the “bond of sympathy” uniting Hobday and Judith. Thirdly, self-torment seems
to be viewed as a mark of maturity, and its absence as one of childishness. Judith torments herself, yet Hobday can torment himself beyond the limits of her conception thanks to his superior age and understanding. On the other hand, Minou, who does not torment herself at all, is presented throughout as an elfin child. Again, there is a germ of truth in this that is systematically distorted. It is not unusual for an Asian woman to look above all for a protective father-figure in her husband (however, this characteristic does occur among non-Asian women too). Nevertheless, public and rather self-abasing displays of conjugal girlishness, such as the kiss on the ear, do not ring true in one who in many ways has had a traditional Asian upbringing. And Minou behaves like a little girl to everyone, not just to Hobday (Turtle Beach 227). Finally, and crucially, Minou is denied all abstraction, and understanding of it, while Judith finally comprehends the essentially concrete meaning of Minou’s sacrifice, “I’m the one who knows why Minou killed herself, Judith thought. And that’s enough for her and me” (278).

Ah, yes, as long as Judith knows, that is quite enough knowledge for both of them. The abstract is validating the concrete just as it does when ancient Indian medical knowledge appears “in the journals.” Knowledge, at any rate that of the abstract and reflective kind, cannot come from the Asian quarter, in line with Hegelian notions of the unreflective Oriental void of subjectivity and desire, and the perception permeates all of Turtle Beach and far beyond. Asian traditions of thought have not provided noticeable impetus for Western theory and critical understanding, though the works of people like Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1957; 1981), J. J. Clarke (1997), Betty Heimann (1937), Wilhelm Halbfass (1988; 1991; 1992), Jack Goody (1996), McKim Marriott (1990), Ronald Inden (1990) and Fred Dallmayr (1996), which deal reflectively with cross-cultural encounters of life and thought, should be noted.

Elsewhere in Turtle Beach, Minou as a narcissistic child is constrained with Judith’s mature and altruistic approach. Minou is comforted by what is bought for her, and Judith by what she buys for others (Turtle Beach 168). It is by no means drawing a long bow, in view of this outlook in the text, to see Minou’s sacrifice as a selfish and self-fulfilling homage to her own “purpose,” with the lesson Judith learns being essentially that self-fulfillment has its place.

Nevertheless, when all is said and done, the Turtle Beach texts ostensibly present balanced and equal Caucasian and Asian female heroes, in line with the ostensible positive post-colonialism that we claim abides in the text. Even though we have shown the result to be distanced enormously from the aspiration, the latter still has to be accounted for. It may be thought at first glance that such an aspiration is inherently affirmative and inclusive of cultural variety, perhaps even truly post-colonial. We would assert that this is not the case.

The first point to note is that Minou is not only Asian. She is half-French, and this aspect is given a great deal of play in the text. Her uninhibited sexuality, in fact, may say more about stereotypes of the French, and their relationship to middle Australian titillatory needs, than about perceptions of Asia. It is true that Asia might contribute the readiness to be raped. Minou asks: “How would it be possible for an Asian woman not to have children? We don’t lock our bodies up” (Turtle Beach 185). However, France is responsible for arousing the desire. Hobday ponders this as Minou prepares to have sex with him (Turtle Beach 173-714). What is immediately striking about this passage is the presence of two discrete Minous, not one Minou with an integrated range of more concrete and more abstract potentialities. There would be little difficulty in slicing up the passage into “concrete Minou” versus “abstract Minou,” the first five sentences the former, the next two the latter, and so on. The effect is digital rather than analogic; it resembles strobe lighting being switched abruptly from blue to red, without any hint of blue to the redness or red to the blueness. Real people, whether of more concrete, more abstract, or entirely indeterminate cultural orientation, are just not like that.
Hence, Minou is a project rather than a person, a two-dimensional figure with sides of starkly different colouration but lacking all depth. The issue of Minou’s sexual behaviour and appeal (*Turtle Beach* 173-174) can sometimes blur the digital display, as it were, but does not really bridge the two personas. If the French/abstract Minou represents sexual excitement, and the Asian/concrete Minou represents sex leading to children, then Minou as floozy/whore may straddle the two; but even here aspects of her flooziness can be ascribed to one or the other discreetly. So, as a “bad woman” scapegoat, she should be colonised/Asian; but to excite the readership or audience successfully, a French component must be tacked on. For example, on one occasion, smiling “reflectively” at a book of coloured photographs, Minou tells Judith, “I liberated this, in Bangkok,” and then hands it to her with an inviting call of “Regarde, la” (*Turtle Beach* 36). The book, taken from Thailand yet promoted in French, turns out to be pornographic. One might add that before the end of the next page in *Turtle Beach*, Minou is back to the Asian/concrete family creature.

The only issue to somewhat bridge the gap between the Minous anywhere in *Turtle Beach* is her flute playing (see 168). It accords with abstract (generalised) countercultural concerns such as gay rights and bare feet; but elsewhere, Minou plays—on a different flute—tunes about natural phenomena in Asia (*Turtle Beach* 185-186).

The flute is a mediating device in another sense. With its phallic shape but feminine timbre, it is traditionally associated with hermaphroditism in Western symbolic thinking, Cixot (1971), and the reference to “piercing tenderness” reinforces the association in this case. Minou is a very hermaphroditic figure; lacy bras combine with free swearing and general toughness. One could say that only in this respect are there two aspects of Minou’s being melded seamlessly. However, the author accomplishes this unity by reducing Minou to a tomboyish child; a man-woman is not created, but rather a boy-girl. Minou’s smallness is everywhere emphasised, particularly with regard to her breasts—in contrast to Judith’s “big norks,” as Ralph Hamilton puts it (*Turtle Beach* 71). She has, as Hobday reminisces, “Little pyramid breasts, too small for a bra. Smaller than my daughter’s [by his previous marriage] when she was eleven years old” (*Turtle Beach* 174). He then goes on to comment that he had touched his daughter’s breasts once, to the alarm of his then wife (who committed suicide after he left her for Minou). This is a further indirect stigmatisation of his sexual relationship with Minou as improper. The main point we make here, though, is that Minou’s hermaphroditism is at the expense of her maturity, and, as we have seen, immaturity is ascribed characteristically to all Asians in *Turtle Beach*.

In other respects, though, Minou is two unintegrated parts. With her uninhibited sexuality and strident radical sympathies, one half Minou is too positively abstract to be Australian; she is European. Minou’s presentation as a hero is in no small measure facilitated by her French component. It is most unlikely that the Asian half Minou would have had her heroism recognised by Judith had the European half Minou not existed—Judith and Minou could not have communicated, as it is only the European abstraction of Minou with which Judith resonates. Judith has not related via the abstract potentiality of Asian Minou, as we have seen that abstract potentiality is denied her; the relationship is with European Minou pasted on the back of her Asian counterpart.

Minou cannot claim to be Asian, yet we note also that she is not a member of the “Australian Establishment” herself. We are constantly reminded that the marriage is not a proper one in the moral sense, especially given the abandonment of the former (Anglo) Lady Hobday. It is important to note that Minou is Eurasian in a full sense. She is not Australasian nor even Australian (although as Hobday’s wife she surely must be an Australian citizen). And when Judith first visits Minou in a Canberra hotel, there is a reference to “a waiter, an Australian” who brings them food (*Turtle Beach* 39). In Australia,
one expects people to be Australian; excluding tourists, overseas students and the like, the residents of Australia are Australian. It is therefore, on the face of it, pragmatically anomalous to state that a waiter in an Australian hotel is an Australian; it is spelling out what is expected, in the same way that talking of “a medically qualified doctor” would. The explicit reference only makes sense if “Australian” is interpreted to mean not “an Australian national,” but rather a “Caucasian Anglo-Aussie”; reading it in this way, Minou is not an Australian, and so it is not otiose to remark that the waiter she employs is. This authorial insistence on a Euro-Asian creature who, though not truly Asian, is also not Australian (even though technically she is) has two implications, which are not opposed to each other as may at first glance seem to be the case, and neither of them is very flattering to Australian multicultural pretensions. Briefly, Minou is both too good to be an Australian, and too bad (because she is ethnoculturally wrong—only Anglo-Aussies can be “real” Australians, regardless of citizenship status). This is one more prime example of the exclusivity of oh-so-inclusive Australian liberal democratic culture. In cases of “the other within,” it is always the “other” that is emphasised rather than the “within.”

Newcomers to Australia—and both authors have had this experience—are often struck by the negative terms in which Anglo-Australian cultural values are defined. Phrases such as “we don’t do that,” “we don’t talk like that” resonate in our memories. Accordingly, the most readily discernible value in the culture is this negativity itself. Joseph Camilleri reminds us (in a personal communication) that on his first overseas tour, Australian Prime Minister John Howard prefaced his reaffirmation of Australia’s relationship with Indonesia by making three statements about Australia, all in negative terms: that “Australia does not claim to be Asian”; that Australia did not face a choice between “our history and our geography” (meaning historical ties with European and North American societies and geographical proximity to Asian societies); and that Australia did not proclaim itself “as a bridge between Asia and the West” (*The Australian* 17 September 1996: 1). Therefore, the carping criticism evident in *Turtle Beach* should not surprise us. It is particularly directed against the supposed non-viability of Malaysia as a nation, a fixation that, as Harold Crouch (1996) shows, is not in accordance with the evidence and that, as Sumit Mandal (in a personal communication) points out, reveals “real insecurities about the Aussie self.” This is no hymn of praise to Anglo-Australia, but an attack on everything else, from Malay royalty to Swiss foreign aid. We notice the cockroach under the rich Malay carpet; in Anglo Australia, the carpet is avoided as much as the cockroach. 39 The only positive values we have seen attached to Australia are reasonableness and understanding—but this means in general the reasonableness to poke fun at oneself (thus implicitly justifying any attack on others), the collusive understanding with the Anglo-Australian audience that, no matter how limited “we” are, at least “we” do not do certain things that “they” do. However, you cannot build an interesting heroic figure around a combination of reasonableness, social acceptability and the absence of any inexcusable flaws; therefore Australians, as seen by themselves, are disqualified from such heroic roles. Australia, though, has a covert longing for both excess and transgression; hence the creation of a “new Australian” type, such as Minou, who will at best vitrify and at worst titillate us. So we admit her, but never into the core psychological category of Australian, and her abstract non-Asian half self advances the admission process. This is a situation that Kong Foong Ling (1995), citing Spivak, calls “the putative centre welcoming select inhabitants of the margin to join the centre in order to better frame the margin and exclude” (94). We might add that in this case, despite the French effect, Minou is allowed to stand with the centre but not to be of it.

Certainly Minou fills in, with her European and Asian characteristics, the enormous volume of matter that has to be suppressed for Anglo-Australia to erect a cultural edifice on an entirely negative foundation. Since the culture values negative potentiality, it is necessary to shift logically positive
(although often morally negative) values onto an Australian who is not an Australian in order to recognise and deny those values at the same time. We have already seen that Minou is a woman who enjoys sex and is very good at it, perhaps both still shocking and intriguing characteristics for many in middle Australia.30

Lying, stealing, and having interesting sex lie within Anglo-Australian potentiality, but it is preferred to keep them at a distance, "[...] Hobday looked at her mildly. [...] she was his other half, the part that lay dormant" (Turtle Beach 111). Yet without doubt d'Alpuget views the existence of a Minou (as opposed to Minou herself) as a desirable development. Andrew Urban (1990) quotes her as saying, in the context of Turtle Beach, "[...] I find it exciting that a new human race is forming—Eurasian. We'll be the first real Eurasian country in the world." Ling, referring to the admiring citation of this observation by Broinowski in a chapter entitled "The Best of both Worlds," asks: "Am I being particularly thin-skinned if I say that I find the use of language here eugenicist?" (92). Surely she is not, yet equally we recognise that this is an odd form of eugenics, one that effectively discriminates against and reviles the object of its creation.

At times Minou may have behaved, especially in her final self-sacrifice, in a morally positive, even heroic, manner; but this is by no means unambiguous, because of the non-agentive instinctive/compulsive rather than rational/altruistic nature of the act. This lack of agency applies to the "acts" of all other Asian characters in Turtle Beach as well. In any case, whether giving herself up to the sea or demonstrating barefoot for gay rights, her actions have a touch of excessiveness from the Anglo-Australian viewpoint. The author/narrator/Judith figure may applaud, but does not really recommend the course to others. After all, "She's [...] different," as Judith explains to some (ABC and Reuters) journalists (Turtle Beach 57). Yet when Anglo-Australia needs a hero, it cannot be one of "us." He (even more so she) would be a "tall poppy," and it is a well-known Australian wont to cut them down. Any characteristics defined in logically positive terms (as "things which are"), transgress Anglo-Australian cultural norms of negative definition, and thus, even where they appear to be morally desirable (such as self-sacrifice), they cannot be permitted to take root in such cultural soil. However, Minou is not only hero, she is also scapegoat: Minou as floozy, pornographer, liar, thief. These qualities are clearly logically positive but morally negative, and need to be kept at a safe distance by Anglo-Australians. The sexual characteristics may be more French than Asian. This simply illustrates that Minou, rather than an Asian paragon, is neither Asian nor a paragon—yet neither is she fully European, truly Australian, or a good uncomplicated villain. Only "old," but not too "old," Australians are Australian in Turtle Beach, in line with a characteristic silence about Aborigines noted in Broinowski by Ling (89).

Anne Maxwell (1995), referring to the positive slant put on hybridity by postcolonial studies in recent years, comments that she is:

yet mindful of the way in which it is implicated in the discourse of nineteenth century racism by dint of its contrast to full-bloodedness. This is to imply that every time critics use the term, they risk reinforcing the very racial characteristics they are essaying to deconstruct. (94)

The discourse referred to by Maxwell has only changed inasmuch as it has become more covert. Minou is the very paradigm of what we might call subtractive hybridity. She is not an integrated being belonging to two worlds, but a collage of unintegrated parts belonging nowhere. She is an eugenics project in that she serves, as a scapegoat/(anti)hero,28 to represent certain logically positive but mostly morally negative qualities that Anglo-Australia wishes to possess and control, but also to distance from themselves. Ultimately, though, any suggestion that Minou might be an Australian-Asian hero founders on the facts that she is neither Australian nor Asian, and that her actions are
at best less than unambiguously heroic and always inappropriate to the norms of the dominant Anglo-Australian culture.

Endnotes

1 This article was first published as Chapter 5, “Inaccuracy and Distortion as Means of Positioning the Reader: A Study of Turtle Beach Texts,” *Australia’s Ambivalence towards Asia: Politics, Neo/Post-Colonialism, and Fact/Fiction*, J. V. D’Cruz and William Steele (Clayton, Victoria: Monash Asia Institute, 2003) 199-257. It has been edited and condensed from the original by John Ryan, who is currently completing a Masters of Arts from the Centre for Peace and Social Justice at Southern Cross University, Lismore.

2 We are thinking here in particular of the notions and values behind the New Criticism, that is, that great art cannot be referred relevantly to its socio-political context and should be an apparent product of the artist’s creative imagination alone. David English makes the point that follows about autobiography. However, his observations hold for fact/fiction in general, since anything that draws too undignifiedly on known historical facts of the real, empirically-observed world around the artist has tended to be seen as inferior for the same reason—that the true artist is not supposed to take material (allegedly) ready-fashioned off the rack. English comments: The autobiographical element in fiction might be a case in point. Until recently fiction which is clearly autobiographical has been excluded from the category of great writing, because a universalist aesthetic, especially under the influence of T. S. Eliot’s cult of impersonality, tends to favour craft, discipline, style, or form—all of which are associated with originality, impartiality, inventiveness, and the capacity to sustain multiple layers of illusion. In this high-art aesthetic, the use of autobiographical elements is regarded as a cheap resort to easy material, a kind of plagiarism, albeit from oneself. The betrayal of the origins of a work—and its process into being—can make it seem less crafted and second class, and can suggest that the writer is not possessed of the universally recognisable talents and wisdoms of a great (male) artist (English, 1997: 200).

3 For German, Peter Mühlhäusler (1986) is a (comparatively) early example of a Foreigner Talk study using literary text, but as the author is a sociolinguist, his discussion centres around theoretical issues within linguistics and does not consider, for instance, the issue of how the dominant (in this case, native speakers of German) may construct the identity of the disempowered (non-native speakers of German).

4 In the book, however, there are three references to such massacres of boat people potentially occurring (see Turtle Beach 56, 87, 278), and two references to their having occurred (see Turtle Beach 67, 216). A variety of people make these references. Four of them are Australians, but Kanan—a Malaysian Indian—is made to say of the Chinese: “The boat people are their kin. When the villagers stone them the Chinese feel they are being stoned” (Turtle Beach 67).

5 Interviewed by Cameron Forbes, he stated: There is absolutely no question that they did [that the massacres occurred]. I have met Vietnamese who have had relatives killed. Only two weeks ago I met a representative of a major refugee organisation who confirmed that people trying to get off the boats had been murdered by local villagers. However, the “representative” concerned (Lionel Rosenblatt of Refugees International) said he had no information that such massacres had occurred, and that he had thought the conversation with Carroll had been about Thai pirates (The Age, 12 February 1992: 11).

6 This is only an implication, but a very strong one. All the Foreign Minister explicitly justified at the time was the Australian Government’s unwillingness to take any action against the film.

7 By the beginning of August 1997, sales of 55,106 copies of Turtle Beach had been recorded. This included 11,259 copies of the second edition, which appeared in 1992. The film clearly sparked renewed interest in the book; the publishers estimate that over 10,000 copies of the second edition sold in 1992 alone. The second edition cover features a film poster of Judith and Minou, with a cast list on the back cover. Sales have dropped
right away, with turnover in 1997 consisting of 36 returns to the publishers (Dianne Milwright, Penguin Books, personal communication 8 August 1997). If interest in Turtle Beach has indeed run its course, could this simply reflect a general Australian retreat from and disengagement with Asia?

This should not be seen as evidence of enlightened anti-colonial attitudes among Australian audiences. The film contains major structural flaws that make it almost impossible to follow, even for those who have read the book, as pointed out in a review by Neil Jillett (The Age 20 March 1992: 12).

Technically, the character Judith Wilkes does not narrate Turtle Beach. However, the narrator is so concerned with Judith’s point of view that both novel and film can be seen as a relentless exercise in *indirect style libre* whereby a single voice speaks ventriloquially through the entire narrative. Much of the time the narrative is overtly interspersed with “Judith thought,” “Judith felt” and the like, suggesting a first-person will behind a third-person veneer of reportage. Judith is a presence in the narrative voice even when she is apparently off the scene. For example, in Chapter 7 of the novel, prior to her arrival in Kuala Lumpur, immigration officers Ralph and Opium are imagined to be discussing the need to keep information from her (Turtle Beach 62). Ralph is then presented as discussing Judith’s attributes with Kanan: “She’s one of those bloody women’s libbers.” He paused and leaned back in the car to look at Kanan. “I’ve got a theory about that sort of shellah,” he added [...]. “I think all they need is a blood good screw [...]. Sanca showed me a school photograph of her. She’s not bad looking, Tall, blond, big norks [...].” (Turtle Beach 71). In short, the narrator is obsessed with Judith. Even where the Judith is not discussed, (for example the description of the Selangor Cricket Club in Chapter 7), the vision of Malaysia and Malaysians remains indistinguishable from those sections where it is more overtly the product of Judith’s observations (such as the description of the Royal Selangor Golf Club in Chapter 12). The undigested report-from-the-scene style does not vary either. Furthermore, there are a number of overt parallels between Judith Wilkes and Blanche d’Alpuget: the two are both journalists, are in Malaysia at around the same time, are both feminists, are both attracted to powerful men, and are physically similar. In short, Turtle Beach seems to minimise any emergent ironic distance between author, narrator and principal character.

In the television documentary *Blanche d’Alpuget: Wrestling with the Angel* (1995), the author came across as frank and kind, but at the same time naive and shallow—attributes not unlike those of Judith Wilkes.

Suvendrini Perera (personal communication) points out that journalists can claim many of the forms of authority associated with the Orientalist—those of the scientist, explorer, anthropologist—with the truth-telling claims of Western technology—the documentary maker, the photographer, etc. Positioning these figures as mediators between the reader and the unknown ground of “Asia” [...], thus invests them with a particular power to tell Australians “the real story” about these exotic places. Certainly alleged Orientalist expertise plays its role too in the putative journalistic credibility of Turtle Beach, although Judith Wilkes tends to rely on “sources” (in particular the [male] Australian High Commissioner Hobday) to provide it.

This analysis relies heavily on the analysis of the verb *lie* in Coleman and Kay (1981).

Fadillah Merican (in a personal communication) notes:

Platform-soled shoes were popular in Malaysia in the early 70s, the peak probably in 1973 and 1974. In 1979, there would have been no platform-soled shoes around; certainly they would not have been worn by a stereotypical rich (read decadent, “Westernised”) Malay prince, no matter how cool-like. This disregard for details, conscious or otherwise, leading to inaccuracy of information, serves to make the prince ridiculous/out of date/laughable, part of the larger exercise of portraying Asians as inadequate and never quite up to Western standards.

So, for example, R. H. Robins (1971) quite properly fulminates:

The term standard language must not mislead. Such forms of speech are descriptively dialects, just like any other dialect, to be described and delimited on just the same criteria as the less socially and officially favoured “regional” dialects [...]. Epithets such as “ugly,” “slowwitted,” and the like are freely employed with reference to the pronunciation of such dialects [...]. Needless to say, the linguist faithful to the principles of objective scientific statement must abjure all such modes of expression and value judgements, aesthetic and quasi-religious, as outside his field. (53)

The depiction of Asians as “trying but just not making it” as Europeans extends beyond the linguistic into other realms of behaviour, exemplified by the following description of a Malay prince’s apartments: “Two
Malays [...] showed them [Judith and Sancha, Ralph Hamilton’s wife] into a reception room with chandeliers, fake Chippendale and a dead cockroach, Judith noticed, almost concealed by the fringe of a silk carpet” (Turtle Beach 132; almost concealed, but not from the journalist’s noticing eye).

However, this case is questionable, as many speakers of Malaysian English seem not to recognize this transmutation of “in leaps and bounds.”

There is a curious parallel here with the following observation by Shirley Lim (1994):

In the sub-field of Asian American literature, more and more the expectation is that the scholar should have at least one major Asian language in hand. As Asian American literature is to a large extent written in English by writers who are themselves unable to write in the language of their Asian ancestors, this expectation points to an unacknowledged emphasis on descent. (45)

Shanta Nair-Venugopal (1997) reports:

The sub-varieties within the sociocultural range of Malaysian English—specifically, the educated or standard sub-varieties of EME and the colloquial variety or CME [...]. I refer to these ethnolects [...]. They were marked for ethnicity in the way in which they were spoken by members of the three major ethnic groups, with particular reference to the segmental phonology and the prosody of the utterances [...]. Prosaically, these ethnolects reflected the speech rhythms of the first languages of these groups and their pronunciation could be attributed to influences from the same sources. Considering the sub-codes as ethnolects [...], provides a useful construct for modelling what are Malaysian, yet ethnically distinctive but nonconflicting ways of speaking, in that they were not purposive means of foregrounding ethnic group identity as separate from that of the socio-cultural milieu. Nor were they attempts to highlight cultural distinctiveness as intragroup members in intergroup contact in the contexts investigated. In deed, they appeared to be culturally and linguistically determined and were not socially motivated as ethnic speech forms. Almost all the participants in the study including the trainers and seminar presenters as the main actors and the trainees as the audience, displayed this “Malaysianness,” which included the feature of discourse accent [...], but some more prominently than others. (361-362)

Note here how a term peculiar to Malaysian English is italicised and used only where the context makes the meaning quite apparent to the Anglo-Australian reader. Turtle Beach is so Anglocentric that, where real Malaysian English lexis is used, it is marked out as foreign.

These two examples illustrate piquantly the main difficulty confronting anybody analyzing the Orientalism of Turtle Beach; it is laid so thickly that a great deal of unpicking is involved. Accordingly, in the case of the doctor, not only the animalism but also the tranquility and the categorization according to appearance are issues. Similarly, the “knowing frog-prince” nexus reveals not only an overt animal equivalence but also unsuccessful imitation (the relationship of a frog-prince to a prince) and instinctive habitual knowledge.

The claim is not that Turtle Beach has only the features of journalism, nor that all journalism has the features we draw attention to in Turtle Beach. However, the formality of the style (parataxis, with much direct and near-direct speech) mentioned earlier, and the emphasis on overt reporting or sensory experience, bring to mind both the television documentary and the assumed intimacy with the reader characteristic of the popular press. Teo (2000) highlights the racism inherent in structural features of Australian news reporting, such as quotation patterns (who gets to speak) and well as generalization and overlexicalisation. Overlexicalisation refers to the repetitive use of often pejorative, “overfull” terms with unnecessary epithets, such as “male nurse” and “young Asian gang members,” and ends up overlapping with generalisation to some extent. The sheer amount of superfluous racial labelling and also animal metaphor in Turtle Beach is very much parallel to the patterns Teo uncovers. Should the reader think that Turtle Beach is perhaps an isolated example of structural racism, remote from everyday Australian prose, we suggest that she need look no further than newspaper coverage of “Asian crime” in Sydney, as Teo does.

A somewhat similar example is Hobday’s expatriation to Minou and Judith on the subject of these two races: “The Indian impulse is to fast, the Chinese to gourmandize [...]. Famine was the historical stimulus for both races, but the Chinese response is straightforward and optimistic, while the Indians’ is subtle and pessimistic” (Turtle Beach 167). Nowhere does any Asian character speak credibly from a superior position on the nature of Western (or Asian) races for the benefit of an Australian audience (for an incredible Asian disquisition on the West, see Turtle Beach 140-141, 271).
23 Andrew Urban (1990) quotes d’Alpuget as stating ’[the script] has gone further than I did—on the most important point. It sets out to broaden the circle of compassion, to go further and to spread it’. In addition to its allowing an Asian to attack Australian policy, the greater clarity with which the film presents Judith as benefiting from Minou’s example suggests that the film may be marginally more balanced than the book in some respects. This is not to praise the film; however, the book’s sly disingenuousness may be even more offensive than the film’s direct approach. For an informed reader, it is perhaps easier to parody and dismiss the graphic massacre on the beach than to survive the thousand cuts of the book. Of course, we have already noted the potential and actual damaging impact of the film, given its sensorily powerful carriage of an outrageous lie. Still, it was the book rather than the film that was successful, both commercially and with the critics.

24 We refer to these partners as “Minou” and “Hobday” in line with the usual practice of Turtle Beach. Minou is occasionally (almost always for newspaper copy) referred to as “Lady Hobday,” but her spouse is never referred to as “Adrian.” As a text with ostensible feminist sympathies, Turtle Beach is remarkably unreconstructed in its use of sexist language; but investigating that fully is beyond the scope of this work.

25 Or sometimes an animal, in keeping with the standard metaphorical treatment in Turtle Beach. We read that “laughter poured out of that thin, supple body as carelessly as music flowed from a magpie” (Turtle Beach 173).

26 We owe this observation to Mark Stevenson (personal communication). It is interesting to note that the pattern is very different when it comes to Western cultural practice, which has made enormous use of Asian models; the haiku, for example, takes its place in Western writing everywhere from Ezra Pound to Australian secondary schools. The West utilises, one may well say assimilates, within its understanding everything from Asia except traditions of understanding themselves; if they were assimilated, this would imply some gap in Western understanding to start with. It is precisely in line with this pattern that Judith understands Minou and Minou doesn’t really understand anything. Asian abstract understanding is denied; there remains unexplored any possibility of its existing in complement with Asian concreteness, producing a more concrete style of what is still reflection. Yet this is clearly what happens, at least in the Indian tradition; see also the discussion of Indian syllogistic reasoning in Heimann (1937); Dandekar (1981: 314; 1982: 94) on the “practical” or experiential nature of Indian philosophy.

27 One Western philosopher’s personal statement, as a conclusion to his discussion on Western thought and Indian thought, is:

My own intellectual background is that of Continental phenomenology, and it is this background which has opened the way for me to India and cross-cultural inquiry. I believe—or perhaps it is a fond hope—that we are approaching a propitious moment in the history of philosophy (what in German is called Sernstunde) where Western and Eastern thought for the first time can become patterns in a genuine global dialogue, which often is liable to have the character of intense mutual contestation. This dialogue implies a learning process where each partner expresses itself to alternating othersness and thereby gains its own bearings, obviating the lure of an intellectual melting pot. Learning from othersness is not (and should not entail) effacement of cultural distinctness [. . .]. There may be room for a sustained reciprocal questioning of premises and objectives leading both to deepened self-understanding and to a more ready acceptance of cultural diversity. In terms suggested by Ramanujan’s essay (1990), this interchange may also involve a process of recontextualization both of Western and non-Western cultures [. . .]. (Dallmayr, 1996: 147)

28 In fairness to middle Australia, we note that England started the practice of keeping nonprocreative sex at a safe yet delightfully accessible distance by the simple mechanism of ascribing it to the French (as reflected in idioms such as “French letter,” “French tickler” and “French kiss”). However, similar associations are well rooted in the Australian psyche (see Turtle Beach 173-174).

29 The rich Eastern carpet is a standard accompaniment to forbidden yet delightful Orientalist erotic musings in the West, and as such is an ambiguous symbol not only in Australia. For instance, the eponymous hero of Herman Melville’s novel Reuben (1849), a poor yet genteel young American sailor, is spirited away from Liverpool to a “club” (brothel) in London by an overwrought, beautiful young Englishman, Harry. There, as Hardwick (2000) describes it.
Inaccuracy and Distortion as Means of Positioning the Reader

A feverish atmosphere of hysteria and panic falls upon poor Harry [...][clearly rendered in sexual images of decadence and privilege in an astonishing embrace. The club is a “semi-public place of opulent entertainment” [...]. Redburn, throughout his scene, is curious and alarmed by Harry’s way of leaving him standing alone in this unaccountable atmosphere. They proceed to a more private room, so thick are the Persian carpets he feels he is sinking into “some reluctant, sedgy sea.” Oriental Ottomans “wrought into plated serpents” and pornographic pictures abound [...]. For the now terrified American, penniless son of a senator and soon, the place seemed “infected” as if “some eastern plague had been imported” [...]. On Redburn goes in images of fear and revulsion [...]” and “[Redburn] thought to himself, that though golden and golden, the serpent of vice is a serpent still.” (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/57)

The claim here is that negatively puritan Australia may be even more likely than the USA to react this censoriously to “Oriental luxury” (interalia, rich rugs), and indeed, even to recoil from American “sleaze” and American positivism. So Watson (2001), thinking back to his Australian childhood and family shock at US films, adds: “Even their wholesomeness seemed a little too wholesome sometimes: I fancy we suspected it owed less to a love of virtue than an unhealthy awareness of depravity” (9).

One might question whether middle Australians of today would still find such things shocking. Undoubtedly mores are changing, but there is evidence that the process is far from rapid. One can consider, for example, the vitriolic reviews of Dorothy Hewett’s 1993 novel The Teacher, which centres on the ecstatic sexual relationship between a 67-year-old disabled woman and a 26-year-old man. One reviewer, Cynthia Blanche (1993), writing in Quadrant, comments:

And then there are the in elegant descriptions of this woman masturbating. This idea of an old crippled woman having an affair or any kind of sex life is a reasonable one but to become at a novel of this subject would have to be based on wisdom and spiritual values none of which is evident in The Teacher. Either La Farge seems to have learnt nothing in her excessively self-centred existence. Surely age without wisdom must be the worst fate to befall any one; the sure sign of an empty life. (80; we are grateful to David English for alerting us to this review)

A second edition of Alison Brinowski’s The Young Lady appeared in late 1996. Interestingly, the offending quote from d’Alpuget has been omitted.

The view of women as either on pedestals (the “lady”), or else fallen much further than men possibly can (the “whore”), goes back in the West at least to early medieval times and has been the subject of much feminist scholarship. Anne Summers (1975) argued early that the bifurcation in Anglo-Australia was pronounced for reasons associated with that culture’s origins, the convict woman being the “whore” whose role was merely to satisfy the sexual needs of society. Minou may have other roles as well, but the deprecatated and indispensable, thoroughly colonised “bad woman” would seem to be one of them.

Works Cited


Camilleri, Joseph. Personal communication. n.d.

Checketts, Susanna. Personal communication. n.d.


Mandal, Sumit. *Personal communication*. n.d.


Stevenson, Mark. Personal communication. n.d.


Alice Mills is Associate Professor in Literature and Children’s Literature at the University of Ballarat. She is the author of Stuckness in the Fiction of Mervyn Peake (2005) and has edited a number of anthologies of literature for children including Mythology: Myths, Legends and Fantasies (2003) and The Children’s Treasure Chest (2004). She is also currently one of the judges for the children’s section of the Australian Aurealis Award for the Best Australian Fantasy of the year.

Amit Sarwal is presently reaching as Lecturer at the Department of English, SGND Khalsa College, University of Delhi. He is also pursuing a PhD on the short stories of the South Asian Diaspora in Australia from the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. From 2006-2007 he was an Honorary Visiting Scholar at NCAS and SPSL, Monash University as an Endeavour Asia Award winner (2006). His areas of interest include Contemporary Australian Literature, Translation Studies and Indian Cinema on which he has published. He has co-edited English Studies, Indian Perspectives (2006) with Makarand Paranjape and Aneeta Rajendran, Australian Studies Now (2007) with Andrew Hassam, Fact & Fiction: Readings in Australian Literature (2008) with Reema Sarwal and Creative Nation: Australian Cinema and Cultural Studies Reader (2009) with Reema Sarwal.


Belinda Wheeler graduated with highest honors from Purdue University North Central, Westville, Indiana, USA, and is currently working towards her PhD in English. Wheeler’s primary areas of interest include American Literature, Australian Aboriginal Literature, and Feminist Criticism. Wheeler has had a previous article on Australian Aboriginal Mothering published, has presented numerous papers at various conferences, and has won several awards for her writing.

Benjamin Miller is a PhD candidate in the School of English at the University of New South Wales and a postgraduate representative for the Association for the Study of Australian Literature. He is currently working on blackface representations of Indigeneity in Australian culture. His recent publications have appeared in the Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (JASAL) and Altitude, an e-journal.

Bill Ashcroft was the Head of School of the School of English 2004-2005. He has been appointed as Chair Professor in English at the University of Hong Kong for three years from 2006. He is internationally recognised as a founding exponent of post-colonial theory. His book The Empire Writes Back, co-authored with Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, was the first text to examine systematically a field that is now universally referred to as “post-colonial studies.” This volume is the standard text in the field, now in its second edition and

Bruce Bennett is Emeritus Professor of the University of New South Wales and Adjunct Professor at the Australian National University and the University of Queensland. He was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2003 for services to Australian literature and education. He is a member of the Australia-India Council and editor of publications at the Australian Academy of the Humanities. His books include Spirit in Exile: Peter Porter and his Poetry (1991), The Oxford Literary History of Australia (1998), Australian Short Fiction: A History (2002), Resistance and Reconciliation: Writing in the Commonwealth (2003), and Homing In: Essays on Australian Literature and Selfhood (2006).

C. A. Cranston has taught at the University of Tasmania; the Alps-Adriatic University (Austria), and was Visiting Professor in Women’s Studies, and Sustainable Development, at Appalachian State University, North Carolina. She is interested in literature and the environment. She co-edited a collection of ecocritical essays titled The Littoral Zone (2007), and edited a narrative anthology of place titled Along These Lines (2000). Her most recent publications are water-themed: Island Studies (2007) and Drought (2008).

Damien Barlow is a Lecturer in English at La Trobe University, Australia. He specialises in Australian Literature, especially nineteenth-century writing and gay, lesbian and queer writing and theory. He is currently working on a research project titled “Queer Mates” - a critical study examining mateship narratives and sexuality in Australian Literature.

David McCooey is the author of the prize-winning critical work *Artful Histories: Modern Australian Autobiography* (1996), as well as numerous essays and reviews on autobiography and poetry in Australian and international publications. He guest-edited an issue of the journal *Life Writing* on ‘Life Writing and the Public Sphere’ and has contributed to a number of bibliographical dictionaries. As well as being a critic he is a poet and a senior lecturer in literary studies at Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, Australia.

David Walker is Professor of Australian Studies at Deakin University, Victoria, Australia. He has written extensively on Australian relations with Asia. His recent publications include *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939* (1999) which won the Ernest Scott Prize for History in 2001 and with Laksiri Jayasuriya and Jan Gorhard, *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation* (2003). He is a member of the Indian Association for the Study of Australia and has delivered conference papers in New Delhi (2004) and Pune (2006).


Dennis Haskell is Professor of English and Cultural Studies and Co-editor of the magazine *Westerly* at the University of Western Australia. He has held a number of fellowships and visiting professorships, including at the National University of Singapore, Georgetown University (USA) and Université Charles de Gaulle (France). He also won the 2007 WA Premier’s Prize for Poetry and is the author of seventeen books, including five volumes of poetry. He is currently working on a critical anthology of contemporary poetry and prose from South-east Asia. His most recent poetry collection is *All the Time in the World* (2006) and the critical book *Beyond Good and Evil: Essays on Literature and Culture in the Asia-Pacific* (2006).

Didier Coste is a French and Australian Professor of Comparative Literature, novelist, poet, translator and literary theorist. He has a number of publications to his name including one co-edited and one co-authored book; some 150 articles. He is well acquainted with India and Indian anglophone and Comparative Literature Studies. He has also published poetry in English in Australia in the 1970s and his bilingual novel *Days in Sydney* was published in Paris last year. He is known for *Narrative as Communication* (1989). He is also completing a book of *Conversations with Hamnun: Essays in Indian and Comparative Literature*, which rewrites and organizes a selection of articles published in the last 4 years or now in the press.

Gaetano Rando holds degrees from both Italian and Australian universities and is currently Associate Professor in the School of English Literatures, Philosophy, and Languages at the University of Wollongong where he teaches subjects in the Italian Studies and English Language and Linguistics majors. One of his major research interests is in the area of Italian Australian studies, the latest volume length publication in this field being *(Migration and Literature: The Italo-Australian Case) Emigrazione e letteratura: Il caso italoaustraliano* (2004).

Gerry Turcotte is Professor and Executive Dean of Arts & Sciences at the University of Notre Dame, Sydney. He is the winner of the 2000 OCTAL/Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching & Learning and an inaugural winner of the 2001 New South Wales Government/ACE Teaching Excellence Award. He is the author and editor of over 100 articles and 14 books, including *Writers in Action: The Writer’s Choice evenings* (1990), *Jack Davis: The Maker of History* (1994), *Neighbourhood of Memory* (1998). He is also the author of the novel *Flying in Silence* (2003), which was shortlisted for the Age Book of the Year.
Hariclea Zengos has been a Professor of English and American Literature at The American College of Greece since 1989. She received her PhD in English from Tufts University in 1989. Her research and publications focus on Greek writers of the diaspora (with a specific interest in Greek-Australian writers), travel writing about Greece, as well as colonial and postcolonial fiction. She is currently completing a book-length study on white colonial European women's construction of Africa in their autobiographical fiction.

Hoa Pham is doing a MA in creative writing at the University of Melbourne. She was an Asialink Literature Resident in Vietnam in early 2007. She is a playwright and author of four books Vixen (2000), Quicksilver (1999), No One like Me (1998) and 49 Ghosts (1998), published in 2002 as a play. She also edits the Asian-Australian on-line journal Peril which can be accessed at www.asianaustralian.org.

Igor Maver is Professor at University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, EU where he holds a personal Chair in Literatures in English. His research and teaching interests include the literatures in English, Post-colonial, Diasporic literatures, and American literature. He teaches English medieval literature, Canadian literature, Australian literature, early 20th century American novel and William Shakespeare's Drama. He was Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Sydney (1994), lectured at the University of California at Davis, USA (1996), and gave several public lectures at the University of Bonn (1997) and at the University of London (1998). He has attended numerous international congresses and conferences, presented papers, organized conference sessions, and served on the executive boards of various international and Slovene associations. He is the author of almost two hundred scholarly articles published in various books, conference proceedings and international journals, two monographs in English on Australian literature (1997 and 1999) and co-author of two books of essays (2000 and 2005). In 2006 he published a book of essays Critics and Writers Speak: Revisioning Post-Colonial Studies.

J. V. D'Cruz was Adjunct Professor in Australia-Asia Relations at Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, and Adjunct Professor in Alternative Futures Studies, Centre for Peace and Social Justice, Southern Cross University, Australia. He researched and published widely in a number of areas, as series editor of multi-volume publications in the areas of Education and in the areas of Language, Linguistics and Literature; with some 16 authored and edited volumes to his credit in areas such as politics, philosophy, education and culture, and some 16 chapters in various books. An expression of his multi-disciplinary research can be found in Australia's Ambivalence Towards Asia: Politics, Neo/Post-colonialism, and Fact/Fiction (2003) co-authored with William Steele.

Jacqueline Lo is Senior Lecturer at the School of Humanities, Australian National University and Chair of Asian Australian Studies Research Network. Her recent publications include Staging Nation: English Language Theatre in Malaysia and Singapore (2004) and Performance and Cosmopolitics: Cross-cultural Transactions in Australasia (2007) co-authored with Helen Gilbert.

John Frow is Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Melbourne. He is the author of a number of books, including Cultural Studies and Cultural Value (1995), Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity (1997), Accounting for Tastes: Australian Everyday Cultures (1999) with Tony Bennett and Michael Emmison, and Genre (2005). With Meaghan Morris he co-edited Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader (1993), and he is currently one of the editors of the Cultural Studies Review.

Juliet Flesch is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne. After taking her BA (Hons) in French and English she worked as a librarian, mainly in the field of collection development, in the National Library of Australia and the University of Melbourne Library. She is the
author of many papers in professional library journals. She gained her PhD in 2002 and has published three books since then: 150 Years, 150 Stories: Brief Biographies of One Hundred and Fifty Remarkable People Associated with the University of Melbourne, with Peter McPhee (2003); From Australia with Love: a History of Modern Australian Popular Romance Novels (2004) and Minding the Shop: People and Events That Shaped the Department of Property & Buildings 1853-2003 at the University of Melbourne (2005). With Dr Rosemary Francis, she is currently writing a history of the Melbourne firm of AE Smith & Son.

Kerry Kilner is a University of Queensland Research Fellow in the Arts Faculty, Executive Manager of AustLit: The Resource for Australian Literature (www.auslit.edu.au) and Associate Editor of The Bibliography of Australian Literature. She has been involved in bibliographical research since 1993 and since the late 1990s in the development of web-based scholarly content for the research and teaching of Australian literature. The place of scholarly communication in the digital age is her special research interest.

Laurie Duggan is an Australian Poet and Critic. He was awarded a two year Literary Fellowship by the Australia Council in 2006 and is currently living in the UK. He has been an Honorary Research Advisor at the University of Queensland and a Writer in Residence at the School of Arts Media and Culture at Griffith University. He has also worked as a movie scriptwriter, an art critic, poetry editor and has taught media studies, poetry writing and art history. He has published many books of poems as well as literary criticism and articles on art, architecture and cultural history in national and international journals, magazines and newspapers. His major works include Mangroves (2003), Compared to What: Selected Poems 1971-2003 (2005), The Ash Range (1987; new ed. 2005) and The Passenger (2006). His acclaimed critical work Ghost Nation: Imagined Space and Australian Visual Culture, 1901-1939 appeared in 2001.

Leigh Dale teaches Australian and postcolonial literatures at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. She is editor of the journal Australian Literary Studies and author of the book The English Men: Professing Literature in Australian Universities (1997) with Alan Lawson, Helen Tiffin and Shane Rowlands, about history of teaching literature in Australian universities. She has co-edited The Body in the Library (1997) with Simon Ryan, and a collections of essays on postcolonial literatures titled, Colonialism and Commerce (2007), with Helen Gilbert.

Lucy Ssex was born in New Zealand, and is a Senior Research Fellow at Melbourne University. She has published editions of crime writers Mary Fortune and Ellen Davitt; and edited four anthologies, including She’s Fantastical (1995), shortlisted for the World Fantasy Award. Her award-winning fiction includes five books for younger readers and one adult novel, The Scarlet Riders (1996). She has written two short story collections, My Lady Tongue and A Tour Guide in Utopia (2005), with another, Absolute Uncertainty (2007). Currently she reviews weekly for the Age and West Australian newspapers. She is also completing a book on early women and crime fiction.

Lyn Jacobs is an Associate Professor and research scholar at Flinders University in South Australia. She is the author of Against the Grain: The Writing of Beverley Farmer (2001) and the "Australian Literary Responses to Asia" - data subset of Auslit, the national bibliographic resource of Australian Literature (www.auslit.edu.au). Her articles on Australian fiction and poetry have been published national and international journals and books.

Margaret Allen is an Associate Professor at University of Adelaide. She is interested in feminist theory, feminist history, 19th century Australian women writers, oral history, and Australian cultural history. She has researched women writers, the making of a middle class colonial culture in 19th century SA, and oral histories of older women of Non English Speaking Backgrounds. She has established a data base of literary
works in 19th century South Australian newspapers. She is on the editorial board of *Australian Feminist Studies*, *Hecate* and *Outskirts* and in 1998 co-edited an edition of *Australian Feminist Studies* on women and religion. Dr Allen is working on a biography of Catharine E.M. Martin and a history of Adelaide High School. Her current research plans relate to Australian women missionaries in India in the late C19 and their national identity in terms of the colonial relations of Australia and India. She is co-editor of *Fresh Evidence, New Witnesses: Finding Women's History* (1989), a documentary history of South Australian women and co-author of the report *Limited Access: Women's Disadvantage in Higher Education Employment* (1995).

**Marty Young** has a doctorate in Earth Sciences and currently works for CSIRO Petroleum as a biostratigrapher. He is also a published horror writer with several short stories and articles to his name. He is co-editor of, with Angela Challis, *Macabre – The New Era in Australian Horror* (2007), a new anthology seeking to capture the best of the past, present and future of Australian Horror.

**Maryrose Casey** is an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow with the Centre for Drama & Theatre Studies at Monash University. Her recent publications include the multi award winning monograph *Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre 1967-1997* (2004). Her other publications include articles and book chapters on contemporary Australian theatre practice, primarily focused on contemporary Indigenous drama and theatre. She is currently collaborating with Wesley Enoch to write *Telling the Story: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander theatre practices for Routledge’s Theatres of the World series*.

**Maya Boutaghou-Coste** is Assistant Professor in French and Comparative Literature at the University of Gabès, Tunisia.

**Michael Emmison** is Reader in Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of Queensland. His research interests are primarily in the field of language and social interaction and he is currently examining the impact of technological modality (telephone, email and online web counselling) on the process of troubles telling and advice giving on a national children’s helpline. His recent books include *Accounting for Tastes* (1999) with Tony Bennett and John Frow, *Researching the Visual* (2000) with Philip Smith, and the edited collection *Calling for Help: Language and Social Interaction in Telephone Helplines* (2005).

**Michele Grossman** is Assoc. Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development at Victoria University, Melbourne. She is the editor of *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians* (2003) and author of *Entangled Subjects: Indigenous/Australian Cross-cultures of Talk, Text and Modernity* (2008).

**N. Martin Nakata** is Chair of Australian Indigenous Education and Director of Jumbunna Indigenous House of learning at University of Technology, Sydney. He is also Honorary Research Fellow Mitchell Library, Sydney. He is the author of *Disciplining the Savages: Savaging the Disciplines* (2007) and has also published various pieces on Indigenous Australians and education in various academic journals and books in Australia and abroad. He has edited *Indigenous Peoples, Racism and the United Nations* (2001) and co-edited *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries* (2005) with M. Langton.

**Patrick Buckridge** is Assoc Professor at the Faculty of Arts, Griffith University, Australia. His research interests include Australian literature and history, History of publishing, Renaissance literature, History of literary education, and History of reading. He is the co-editor of *A Literary History of Queensland* (2007).

**Paul Genoni** is a Senior Lecturer with the Faculty of Media, Society and Culture. He has taught at Curtin
since 1993, and previously worked in the Library at the University of Western Australia, where he was Law Librarian for a number of years. Paul’s teaching area is information and library studies, with a focus on collection management, reference librarianship and digital libraries. Paul is active in several professional associations. He is a longstanding member of the Australian Library and Information Association, and has served on a number of the association’s WA based management committees. Since 2004 he has been the appointed educator on ALIA’s national Education Reference Group. Paul is also an active member of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL). He has served as the state representative to the Association’s national executive, and for several years (2002-2004) as national secretary. In 2006 he co-convenor of the ASAL national conference to be held in Perth. He is the author of Subverting the Empire: Explorers and Exploration in Australian Fiction (2004) and has co-edited Theda Astley’s Fictional Worlds (2006).

Paul Sharrad is Associate Professor in English Literatures at the University of Wollongong. He teaches postcolonial literatures and has particular research interests in India and the Pacific. He is the author of Raja Rao and Cultural Tradition (1987) and Albert Wendt and Pacific Literature: Circling the Void (2003) and he has recently completed a manuscript on Indian English fiction and literary history. He is past editor of the CRNLE Reviews Journal and New Literatures Review and serves on a number of editorial boards.

Penny van Toorn is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Sydney. Her research explores writing by and about the Indigenous peoples of Australia and Canada. Her publications include the noted Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia (2006), which traces the beginnings of Aboriginal writing back to the early colonial era, and investigates the different cultural and institutional settings in which Aboriginal people produced and deployed written texts.

Peta Stephenson is an ARC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne and is the author of The Outsiders Within: Telling Australia’s Indigenous-Asian Story (2007). She specialises in the study of cross-cultural alliances between non-white migrant and Indigenous people. In particular, her research focuses on contemporary cultural production within hybrid communities. Her research results have been widely published in a number of journals and as book chapters in edited collections. Her current project traces the long history of Islam in Indigenous Australia as a way of understanding its growing popularity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

Peter Fitzpatrick is Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies at Monash University. He is the author of several books on Australian drama, including the critical survey After “The Doll”: Australian Drama since 1955 (1979), individual studies of David Williamson (1987) and Stephen Sewell (1991), and more than sixty articles in that field. He is also a published biographer—his dual biography Pioneer Players: The Lives of Louis and Hilda Esmonde (1995) was shortlisted for the Premier’s Literary Award, Vance Palmer prize, and for three other national awards in 1995; novelist—the crime novel Death in the Back Pocket (1993), and the historical-metaphysical-crime-fable Promontory (2001); and cinema screenplay writer—Hotel Sorrento (1995) and Brilliant Lies (1996), for which he won an AFI (Australian Film Industry) Award in 1996. His current research is concerned primarily with Musical Theatre, both as a historical phenomenon in Australia and as a cross-cultural form which requires its own forms of conceptualisation and methodology. It’s an area in which he has recently published several influential articles, and which also reflects his current major interests in theatre practice. He has directed twenty-seven major public productions, including the first Melbourne performance of Louis Nowra’s Inner Voices, and plays by Brecht, Caryl Churchill, Alex Buzo, Edward Bond, and Michael Gow; more recently, his performance activities have involved directing large-cast musical theatre, and include five works by Stephen Sondheim—among them the Australian premiere of Pacific Overtures, the bicentennial extravaganza Manning Clark’s “History of Australia” – The Musical, the cabaret show Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in
Pramod K. Nayar teaches at the University of Hyderabad. He has published articles on Indian Writing in English, Translation studies, American Literature, English Literature, and Literary Theory. His recent books include *Reading Culture: Theory, Praxis, Politics* (2006), *Virtual Worlds: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cybertechnology* (2004), and *Literary Theory Today* (2002).

Ralph Crane is Professor of English and Head of the School of English, Journalism and European Languages at the University of Tasmania, Australia. He has published widely on Anglo-Indian (Raj) fiction, Indian English fiction, and J.G. Farrell. His books include *Inventing India* (1992); *Ruth Prawer Jhabvala* (1992); *Troubled Pleasures: The Fiction of J.G. Farrell* (with Jennifer Livett); five edited books—on Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Maurice Shadbolt, J.G. Farrell, and Indian diaspora writing; and editions of Charles Pearse’s *Love Besieged* (2003), Maud Diver’s *Ldamani* (2004), and Margaret Wilson’s *Daughters of India* (2007). He is currently preparing a scholarly edition of A.E.W. Mason’s *The Broken Road* for OUP India as part of a larger “Raj Recovery Project.”

Reema Sarwal is presently pursuing a PhD on Contemporary Australian Fantasy Fiction at the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She has taught as Lecturer at the Department of English, Miranda House, University of Delhi, and also tutored at SECPS, Monash University. From 2006-2007 she was also an Honorary Visiting Scholar at School of English, Communication and Performance Studies, Monash University. Her areas of interest include Contemporary Australian Literature, Popular Fiction and African Literature on which she has published. She has co-edited *Fact & Fiction: Readings in Australian Literature* (2008) and *Creative Nation: Australian Cinema and Cultural Studies* Reader (2009) with Amit Sarwal, and is also working as annotator for the online Routledge Annotated Bibliography of English Studies.

Richard Hosking is a Senior Lecturer in English and Australian Studies at the Department of English, School of Humanities, Flinders University. His areas of expertise includes Australian literature; creative writing; contact history; South Australian studies; South Australia; Australian studies; writing. He is the co-editor of *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian Frontier and the Violence of Memory* (2000), which won the Historical Society of South Australia John Tregenza Award for National Community History.

Richard White grew up in Sydney and teaches Australian history and the history of travel and tourism at the University of Sydney, Australia. He is the author of the influential *Inventing Australia* (1981) and co-editor of a number of books including *Memories and Dreams* (1996), *The Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing* (1996) and *Cultural History in Australia* (2003). His most recent book, a collaboration with five Honours students, was *On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia* (2005). He has published widely on war, nationalism, Americanisation, popular culture, travel, tourism and Australian identity. He is currently writing a history of the “cooee” to be published by Melbourne University Press, and is working on Australian tourism in Europe and Asia.

Robin Gerster is Associate Professor in the School of English, Communications and Performance Studies at
Monash University. He is a specialist in war literature, Robin Gerster is the author of several books, including the award-winning Bignoting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing (1987) and Legless in Ginza: Orientating Japan (1999), and has published prolifically in journals and newspapers in both Australia and abroad. At present he is researching a book on the post-war military occupation of Japan.

Russel Blackford is an Australian philosopher, writer, and critic, currently based in Melbourne. As a creative writer, he specialises in science fiction and fantasy. He is the author of the science fiction trilogy Terminator 2: The New John Connor Chronicles [Dark Futures] (2002), An Evil Hour (2003) and Times of Trouble (2003)]; Kong Reborn (2005), a sequel to the original (1933) King Kong movie; and many stories, articles and reviews. With Van Ikin and Sean McMullen, he is co-author of Strange Constellations: A History of Australian Science Fiction (1999). His fiction has won the Dintmar Award and the Aurealis Award. His science fiction criticism has won the William Atheling, Jr. Award on three occasions. His philosophical work frequently deals with issues involving the human, or posthuman, future. He is interested in the ethics, and possible regulation, of emerging technologies, and the future of religion, morality, art, literature, political organisation, and human nature itself.

Scott Brook is a Melbourne-based writer. His research on Vietnamese Australian cultural heritage and politics has been published in various Australian and international Journals and magazines.

Sonia Myck is presently an Honorary Associate in the School of Letters, Art and Media at the University of Sydney, Australia. Her research interests include History of the book, Multicultural literary production in Australia, Culturally and linguistically diverse writing communities, Canadian multicultural literature, and the construction of national and cultural identities in multicultural societies. She is also the Editor of Australasian Canadian Studies, refereed journal of the Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand (ACSANZ). She is the author of In Search of the Split Subject: Psychoanalysis, Phenomenology, and the Novels of Margaret Atwood (1996) and Canute Literature: Critical Essays on Canadian Ukrainian Writing (2001), and has co-edited Australian Mosaic: An Anthology of Multicultural Writing (1997) with Chris Baker and edited I'm Ukrainian, Mate! New Australian Generation of Poets (2000).

Stephen Alomes, when not thinking about the human condition in a globalising world, teaches Australian Studies at Deakin University, Melbourne and Geelong. He is the editor of Islands in the Stream: Australia and Japan Face Globalisation (2005), a comparative study of two developed societies under global strain. He has also studied two important, subjects, which are not always academically fashionable in Australia, nationalism, in A Nation at Last?: Australian Nationalism, 1880-1988 (1988) and associated, often xenophobic, populism, including in French Worlds Pacific Worlds (1998). His book When London Calls: The Expatriation of Australian Creative Artists to Britain (1999) explored a post-colonial theme, other Australians often scrutinised back home. He is currently researching new forms of expatriation in a globalising world, and mainstream populism as a response to change and to “strangers.” His other major research interest is “the Australian game,” Australian Football, and popular culture.

Susan Jacobowitz is an Assistant Professor of English at Queensborough Community College, part of The City University of New York (CUNY). She earned her PhD in English and American Literature from Brandeis University with a dissertation that focused on the experience of being “second generation” -- the son or daughter of Holocaust survivors. Recent publications include work on second generation literature, Australian Jewish writers, the Jewish graphic novel and the conflicts and challenges of modern Jewish identity.

Susan Sheridan is Adjunct Professor of Women’s Studies and English at the Department of Women’s Studies,
Flinders University. Her research interests include Australian literature; women writers; feminist theory; women in Western societies; gender and Australian cultural history; media history. She has co-edited Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s (1993) and is the author of Along the Faultlines; Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women’s Writing, 1880s to 1930s (1995).

Toni Johnson-Woods teaches Media & Communications at the University of Queensland. She has published in the fields of Australian, British and American popular fiction, and crime fiction in both the nineteenth and twentieth century. She is currently researching pulp fiction in Australia and has recently published books on television, Blame Canada: South Park and Popular Culture (2007); Big Brother: Why did that Reality TV Show become such a Phenomenon (2002); and on pulp fiction, Pulp: A Collectors’ Book of Australian Pulp Fiction Covers (2004). Her book on Carter Brown will be published in 2008.

Tony Bennett is Professor of Sociology at the Open University, a Director of the Economic and Social Science Research Centre on Socio-Cultural Change (CERSC), and a Professorial Fellow in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne. He was elected to membership of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1998. His publications include Formalism and Marxism (1979); Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero, with Janet Woollacott (1987); Outside Literature (1990); The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics (1995); Culture: A Reformer’s Science (1998); Accounting for Tastes; Australian Everyday Cultures, with Michael Emmison and John Frow (1999); Culture in Australia: Policies, Public, Programs, co-edited with David Carter (2001); Differing Diversities: Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity, (2001); Understanding Everyday Life, edited with D. Watson (2001); Contemporary Culture and Everyday Life, edited with Elizabeth Silva (2004); and, most recently, Posts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism (2004) and New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society, edited with Larry Grossberg and Meaghan Morris (2005).

Tony Hughes-d’Aeth is a Lecturer in English and Cultural Studies at the University of Western Australia. His research interests include Comparative media studies, including new media theory, film and television studies, Cultural studies centred on textuality and mediation, and Australian literature and culture, especially nineteenth-century literature and Australian film from 1970 to the present. His book Paper Nation: The Story of the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, 1886-1888 (2001) won the Ernest Scott and Keith Hancock prizes for history. He is currently writing a literary history of the Western Australian wheatbelt.

Victoria Nagy is currently pursuing PhD research at the Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University on the secret poisonings committed, between 1846 and 1851, by women in Essex County, England. She was the Australian Studies Lecturer at Eötvös Lorand University (ELTE) Budapest from 2006-2007, where she taught Australian history, politics, current affairs and film. Her major research interests are gender studies, British and Australian history, crime fiction, popular culture and literature.

William Steele is an Honorary Research Associate with the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University. He has completed Masters degrees in German linguistics and taxation studies and teaches and researches in the Department of Communication, Languages and Cultural Studies, Victoria University, Australia. He is the co-author of Australia’s Ambivalence Towards Asia: Politics, Neo/Post-colonialism, and Fact/Fiction (2003).

Yasmine Gooneratane, AO, is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Macquarie University, New South Wales, Australia, where she has held a Personal Chair in English Literature since 1991. She is also the Patron of the Jane Austen Society of Australia, is the author of twenty books which include four volumes of poetry, three surveys of Sri Lankan writing, studies of Jane Austen, Alexander Pope and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, a family
memoir, a collection of short stories, two edited anthologies of fiction and poetry, two volumes of literary essays, and three novels, the first of which, A Change of Skies (1991), was awarded the Marjorie Barnard Literary Prize for Fiction. The second, The Pleasures of Conquest (1995), and third, The Sweet and Simple Kind (2006), were shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize. She became Macquarie University’s first Doctor of Letters in 1981, was honoured with the Order of Australia in 1990 for distinguished service in the fields of literature and education, and in 2001 received from the Samvad Foundation of India the 2001 Raja Rao Award and Trophy to recognize her outstanding contribution to the literature of the South Asian diaspora.