There is Nothing Like a Lie

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Poets are liars, as the proverb runs,
And I being one, attest that is true.
Some lie for profit or possessions,
And some for lack of something else to do.
But I tell lies that I might lie with you,
Who otherwise were lost to me for sure:
If you were lost, no poems would ensue,
And this is what no poet can endure.
Perhaps you think it easy to devise
Fables to camouflage these lies of ours:
You need imagination to tell lies,
So Aristotle calls them metaphors.
Love lies, and the body dies, in grief—
Awash upon the shores of disbelief

(Henry Weinfield, 1999)

The Philosophical Experiment of ‘AS IF’: Art apprehending truth through the Symbol

Plato in his rendition of the hierarchy of pleasures relegated poetry (and by implication the arts) to an inferior status due to its distance from truth. It has nevertheless always been a curiosity that Plato in his philosophical writings in which Socratic thought was privileged draws unashamedly from the language of poetry to argue his case. The black and white steeds that represent oppositional forces in the soul come to mind. Plato, along with Aristotle, laid the ground for metaphysics. In being concerned with the ultimate nature of reality they found that answers were not forthcoming and that no certain knowledge of metaphysical questions was possible. Perhaps it was this incertitude that led them to find solace in poetic symbols that succeeded in apprehending ‘truth’ rather than defining them.

It appears that any attempt to define a lie or to apprehend its significance in the history of art, philosophy, politics and ethics is foiled by its slippery nature. Lies, we are reminded by Vijay Mishra in his paper ‘The Influence of Kalidasa on Shakespeare: The genre of the Key-note Address and the Story of the Lie’, have the ‘smell of mortality’ about them. Lies, as we know, when uttered, call the supposed ‘truth’ as much into the foreground as the lie that attempts to destroy or mask them.
Furthermore lies have a long history of metaphysical baggage explaining and confounding the need to construct a lie in terms of a negation of something else (V. Mishra, 2007). It follows that when we speak of ‘lying’ that we are assuming the existence of a truth.

‘Truth’ (as slippery as the lie in the definitional sense) may be determined from a position of logic, religious belief, political expediency or empirical measurement. These are dictates that vary across time and are dependent on the prevailing ‘truth’ monitors that emerge in each era and from divergent cultures in that time. When relating lies to art we become concerned with a number of issues: Is art a necessary illusion? Is fiction a ‘lie’? Must the art have a moral basis based on a ‘truth’ otherwise is it partaking in a lie? Can lies lead to truth? Is a lie really a lie if the teller believes it to be the truth? How does one distinguish between terms such as ‘valid logically’; ‘fictionally true’; ‘morally true’, ‘psychologically true’?

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century it was almost a philosophical sport amongst theoreticians to give credence to the value of fiction which was deemed fundamental to productive theorizing. Vaihinger, in his book The Philosophy of ‘As if’ (Vaihinger, 1924) notes the centrality of ‘fictions’ and points to William Occam’s pronouncement in the fourteenth century that ‘ficta’ ‘although their theoretical non-existence might be admitted, are practically necessary and must be recognised in this sense’ (Vaihinger, 1924, vii). He explores Kant’s use of ‘heuristic fictions’; demonstrates that Goethe’s fiction ‘prepared the way heuristically for the Darwinian hypotheses’ (Vaihinger, 1924, p. 86).

Vaihinger debates with vigour the essential difference between a hypothesis and a fiction. He credits the hypothesis as having more value given the goal ‘which it has ultimately in view is to be theoretically tested and established by the facts of fiction’ (p. 87). The difference here seems to be dictated by whether an idea constructed in imagination can be categorized after examination as fictional or hypothetical. Vaihinger says of Nietzsche: lying ‘in the extra-moral sense’ is what Nietzsche, with his well-known fondness for forced expressions, calls the conscious deviation from reality to be found in myth, art metaphor, etc. The intentional adherence to illusion, in spite of the realization of its nature, is a kind of lie in an extra-moral sense; and ‘lying’ is simply the conscious, intentional encouragement of illusion (Vaihinger, 1924, pp. 342-43).

Vaihinger refers to other well known Nietzschean positions: that Nietzsche saw errors as potentially beneficial; that some doctrines are true, but deadly, that Nietzsche approved of Plato’s indispensable lie in the Republic, that freedom of will is ‘a necessary delusional concept’ and that moral freedom is also a ‘necessary illusion’. It appears that the philosophical excursions by Vaihinger still hold credence one hundred years later though in the last stages of post-modernism a contemporary audience is well tutored in the plurality of values and truths; in Nietzschean perspectivism; and probably less enthused about the value of scientific hypotheses. ‘Lies’ it seems have always been untenable; they are sometimes ‘good’/productive, sometimes merely fiction; sometimes necessary, and they are definitely despicable. And yet there really is very little confusion when we call another person a ‘liar’ or when we tell a lie or when we seek legal recourse in the face of the lie.

The writers in this issue of Double Dialogues, eighty three years after Vaihinger, take on the question of ‘As if’ with the additional benefits of the lessons of history, art and criticisms. The latter have further explored not only the provisional nature of knowledge that has dictated our world but with an interest in looking back in time to understand the reasons and ways in which ‘truths’ and ‘lies’ have been constructed. Art it appears has always accessed these constructions.

The essays in this collection perform at times a precise dance with ‘truth’ vying with her partner ‘lies’, attempting to somehow hold leadership in the steps that are taken. And yet the dance enters a bacchic celebration when ‘truth’ is seen to be indistinguishable
from 'lies' or when the defining properties applied to one also meets its opposite. One is shown how the satirical mode in painting can unmask the lie (Morgan; Forrest); how the truth is encrypted in history and family in half-remembered theatrics of an unknowable past (Rutherford; Flattley) and there are truths that are ineffable and can only find expression in aesthetic silence (Blundell). The biographical subject is shown to be evaded and masked by selection, empathy or a misguided trust in cause and effect (Haysom; Brooks) and characters in novels are interrogated via the antics of the narrator writer and audience reception (Hecq, Goodrich). Political context spawned by colonial relationships bring with them lies that are confused with truth when political advantage is the prime player (S. Mishra) Each essay is engaged with questions of ethics to show that such ethical stands have no bases on which critical evaluations can be made (Fairfax; V. Mishra; Goodrich) or to debate possible benefits of value systems despite the loss of absolute values (McCulloch; Fairfax; V Mishra).

Unbearable Truths, Buried Lies: The Uncanny, Melancholia and Tragedy

Vijay Mishra begins his paper with a powerful quote from Conrad's The Heart of Darkness

I would not have gone so far as to fight for Kurtz, but I went for him near enough to a lie. You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies, –.

Vijay Mishra notes that The Heart of Darkness is a novel that 'is a memorially constructed narrative and that the narrator Marlow knows the ending, an ending which will end in a monumental lie, a lie which becomes necessary because the truth of the world can only be reconfigured as a lie or else living in it would become unbearable' (Mishra, 2007). In contrast The Outsider by Albert Camus tells a tale of Meursault who decides to embrace death rather than live the lie. Written in the mid twentieth century, more than fifty years later than The Heart of Darkness, secularization had reached a peak. Societies created in a context of adherence to Christianity were undergoing reassessment; individuals sought values outside Christian precepts. In this text Meursault the anti-hero decides that living the lies of his society is more unbearable than being executed. It appears that Meursault in agreeing with Marlow, (characters though they be), prefers death to living the lie. The construction of narrators and their complex relationship with their creators and audience is a common theme in these articles. What is of significance is the power of art and philosophy to express and expose political and social atrocities endemic to colonial histories; to signal the emergence of new awareness in the wake of the breakdown of essentialist histories world-wide and the role of literature and philosophy continually across time, place and culture in identifying new ways of recognizing the lies we tell when we are in a relentless search for the truth.

Albert Camus experiments in The Outsider with a philosophical view and embodies it in his character Meursault who Camus tells us ‘is condemned because he doesn’t play the game….he refuses to lie. Lying is not only saying what isn’t true. It is also, in fact especially, saying more than is true and, in the case of the human heart, saying more than one feels. We all do it, every day, to make life simpler. But, contrary to appearances, Meursault doesn’t want to make life simpler. He says what he is, he refuses to hide his feelings and society immediately feels threatened’ (Camus, 2000, pp. 118-190). Meursault, of course is secular man, and Camus is embroiled in the debate that in a world without God, suicide appears a viable option.

However Camus is adamant that man and woman must face the fact that we are condemned to death and live saturated with this terrible knowledge. Camus proposes the value of this awareness, that we must forego the idea of a rational universe and
embrace the absurd. Nevertheless this is not a world without effort, instead it is one that opposes the world’s meaninglessness with our revolt, our freedom and our passion. Meursault, he writes of his character, ‘is driven by a tenacious and therefore profound passion, the passion for an absolute and a truth’ (Camus, 1955).

Most critical responses to Camus’ *The Outsider* have focussed on the existential quality of the text. Camus also, however, in writing in the time of modernism is experimenting on many levels and one of these involved the creation of a character who for the first part of the novel does not have awareness of any ethical position, of personal values or the values of others and therefore cannot be, as was considered necessary at the time, a ‘realised’ character. The existential quality of Meursault does not come into being in the narrative until Meursault has awareness, when he, like Sisyphus, ‘proletarian of the gods, powerful and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition; it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn’ (Camus, 2000, p. 109). ‘Scorn’, one may argue is not enough; political action is for many a necessity. Camus who argued vehemently against any form of violence, nevertheless writes a narrative about a murder. He sets the story in a colonised environment in which the hero kills an Arab. Consequently Camus’ narrative now receives analysis indicating that whereas Meursault was apolitical, Camus was not.

In the AFTERWORD (1955), Camus notes that his character ‘when asked to say that he regrets his crime...replies that he feels more annoyance about it than true regret. And it is this nuance that condemns him’ (Camus. 1955, p. 119). It has always been a puzzle that Camus stated that he ‘tried to make my character represent the only Christ we deserve’. Camus was enigmatic about what he meant by this but does write that he said it not to blaspheme ‘but simply with the somewhat ironic affection that an artist has a right to feel towards the character he created’. Meursault is celebrated because he ‘does not play the game’; he will not lie. But Meursault does not really know much; he has no awareness of the political inequalities that beset Algiers and indeed he is executed because he refuses to cry at his mother’s funeral rather than because he has killed a man, and specifically an Arab. Camus tells us about a colonising community where murder of the colonised is of less significance than social proprieties and standard community morality.

David Carroll in a recent re-interpretation of Camus’ work makes a salient point and one that gives new meaning to Meursault being the only Christ we deserve.

*The Outsider*... exposes the fundamental injustice of any legal system in which the death penalty is imposed and dramatizes what could be called the colonialist or racist dimension of what Camus called absolute systems of justice, where who or what you are, or rather, who society through its legal system defines you as being, ultimately determines your innocence or guilt (Carroll, 2007, p. 37).

Such an interpretation written within a post-colonial context explicates how Camus’ novel and his interest in ‘truth’ and ‘lies’ has political underpinnings as much as it has philosophical ones and that when Camus reflected that his character was the Christ we deserved he created one that refused to lie, but who being unaware of the whole truth of his society, was limited and unable to redeem his community. The ‘Christ we deserve’ might die for ‘truth’ but he is unaware of the complexity of lies that marred it. He dies hating the society that condemns him as an outsider, but is not aware that in being deemed guilty he is a scapegoat of a society which is appalled more for his anti-Christian stance than it is for the murder of an Arab.

It perhaps is a mistake to assume that Camus empathizes with Meursault to a point in which there is little detachment. He does tell us that his affection towards his character is an ironic one and although we are meant to affirm the passion and revolt exhibited by Meursault it should be remembered that Camus is constructing a complex character...
who in his symbolic representation reflects a network of philosophical experiments. As Conrad demonstrates in his construction of Marlow, Camus is equally obsessed with the way a ‘lie’ simultaneously destroys and sustains human life.

Ann McCulloch’s essay ‘Tragedy and the Lie’ argues that Tragedy in its art-form has the capacity to veil the unbearable truths of life. McCulloch echoes Camus’ idea of Meursault being the only Christ we deserve in her rendition of Tragedy and its disappearance in the contemporary world. McCulloch agrees with Nietzsche that Tragedy proper had long vanished but that there had remained literature in which tragic themes were explored. Furthermore these protagonists fought against prevailing decadence and wrought new insights. She argues that perhaps we now live in a time unworthy of the purging quality of the tragic arts in the same sense that Camus offers up Meursault as a token of the secular sacred. She argues that the art of tragedy with its capacity to recognise the unbearable nature of truth, and its catharsis enabling only a glimpse of such truth, now finds a world unable to proffer forth a protagonist.

McCulloch reflects on some examples of tragic art and demonstrates that there is collusion between the sustaining of the lie and the compulsion to repeat imminent exposure of it. The finite, she believes, is bound not by limits but by the human propensity to repeat, to return to the object of desire. Her essay explores how Tragedy rests on the unfolding dance of imminent exposure of repressed ‘truths’, the actual unfolding of the lie and the barely recognized moment of the sublime that accompanies what might be recognized as a blinding truth. McCulloch argues that blinding truths in this age, its breadth of evil, have become banal and that the art of Tragedy has no response to the banal.

Sudesh Mishra furthers the debate on the philosophical and political ambiguities of the lie by quoting Hannah Arendt on evil. His essay ‘Concerning an axiom that flutters like a door hinge or butterfly’ identifies the application of the ‘Uncertainty Principle’ as he looks at a particular case of political atrocity within a colonial context. This perhaps complicates and extends McCulloch’s view that implied that evil dies on its feet as content for tragic art in a world that treats evil as banal. Arendt notes, and Mishra does not miss her irony that “evil is no more than a privative modus of the good, that good can come out of evil; that, in short, evil is but a temporary manifestation of a still-hidden good” (Arendt 1970, 56). Sudesh Mishra contends that ‘lies are but temporary manifestations of still hidden truths’. He writes:

It is my contention, in this paper, that at the heart of most discursive systems—and discursive is the operative word here—resides an uncertainty principle. Logical modes of argumentation come apart or take on a hyper form when we enter the self-referential field of paradoxical axioms, such as “I lie and that's the truth.” If we were to undertake an "extrapolative leap," thereby dispensing with the logical mode of argumentation, we could claim that discursive modes of inquiry (juridical, historical, critical, sociological, etc.), which rely on producing their object by analysing a variety of opinions, subjects, testimonies and archives, operate on an uncertainty principle in that truth-telling and lie-saying are simultaneously possible and impossible within such systems. To illustrate my point as opposed to demonstrating it, I want to revisit a famous case relating to the alleged assault of a female labourer, Kunti, by a white overseer on the tenth day of April, 1913, in Nadewa—one of the many plantations to which Indian labourers were assigned under the system of indentured migration to the Fiji Islands.

Sudesh Mishra tells Kunti’s story in its full complexity acknowledging and illustrating the ways in which ‘truth’ and ‘lies’ find their individual veracity in the core and outcomes of the other. This is an essay that shows the uncertainty principle at work within a political situation that embraces the forces of colonialism (and post-colonial re-assessments), gender issues in which ‘the sexualised body of the coolie woman ‘... formed the battleground in the high-stakes war waged between colonialists and
nationalists’ (M. Mishra, 2008) and within a political context in which ‘the political risks were such that a potential truth had to be transformed into a lie’.

Discerning what is a ‘truth’ or a ‘lie’ becomes further complicated if one accepts Freud’s understanding of repression and the extent to which there is a human need to hide unbearable truths. His view though that repression has a price and that pathologies will find expression in neurotic and destructive behaviour indeed complicates any expectation that the truth is accessible. Owners of this neurotic behaviour do not know the origins of it except perhaps to have an inkling that there is something lurking in their story that had best remain hidden.

For Vijay Mishra Freud’s interpretation of E.T.A Hoffmann’s ‘The Sand-Man’ is in fact making a statement, which is also an explanation of a lie: a compulsion to repeat which is pathological in origin. It is important to understand that what is repeated is of a self-destructive and destructive nature. It is the resultant behaviour of a lie that is being lived, of a hidden truth that is making itself known in aberrant form. As Oedipus seeks the truth his pathology is such that he will blind himself to it when it is laid out in front of him. Incest victims, unaware of their abuse, will seek out behaviour that mirrors their hidden pain and repeat it again and again, and writers wanting to disclose a truth about a subject may inadvertently ‘lie’ in order to unconsciously avoid an unpalatable truth.

Jennifer Rutherford in ‘Melancholy Secrets; Rosa Praed’s Encrypted Father’ (Rutherford, 2007) sheds original light on the writings of Rosa Praed. Her argument finds its subject launched in the classic study of melancholy by Torok and Abraham (1994) who argue that melancholy is occasioned not by the loss of an object of love, but by the secret this loss entails. Rutherford uncovers:

the secret harbouring in Rosa Praed’s revelations of a massacre. In Praed’s famous account of the Hornet Bank massacre (1885/1902) and its aftermath — the slaughtering of the Yiman people — we find the father standing as the ‘signpost’ of his own encryption. Circulating through the daughter’s testimony he is both overly present and secreted. I suggest here that the secret of Praed’s memoir is not simply the father as perpetrator but that the text itself, — its authority, its testimonial, and its melancholy — encrypts the father as its secret love (Rutherford, 2007).

Accessing the ‘lies’ in Praed’s writings Rutherford achieves a reviewing of an old story, not only demonstrating that Praed, as Gordon Reid, writes in A Nest of Hornets (an historical account of the Hornet Bank Massacre) is ‘responsible for more inaccurate statements about Hornet Bank than any other author”(Reid, p.157). Rutherford however goes deeper than merely acknowledging errors in Praed’s writing. She shows specifically how core psycho-analytical insight of melancholy pertains not to repression, but to an encrypted and secret subject. Rutherford writes:

In Praed’s My Australian Girlhood however, we don’t find hidden bones, and I think this is generally true of colonial literature where the dead are often unashamedly on display; in many accounts it is evident that white men left them rotting above ground. One of the uncanny things about reading colonial literature, in fact, is how un-secret the dead are. In giving this literal content to the repressed secrets of the past, such reading and writing assume a primary morality, in which melancholy is the end result of an essentially moral agent or collectivity, troubled by unspoken and yet easily identifiable wrong-doing’ (Rutherford, 2007).

The secret that Rutherford’s approach uncovers is explained in terms of not so much the hidden or repressed but instead what is entombed and ‘consigned to an eternal silence’ (Rutherford). Rutherford uncovers the secret by identifying how language itself (in this case the language of Praed) has concealed the secret’s existence. This essay
demonstrates the value of identifying in Australian writings an endemic melancholy. Via Rutherford’s analysis we are shown the political, aesthetic and psychological ramifications of a melancholic subject housing the beloved object in secret whereby the self deludes itself into believing that no loss has occurred.

McCulloch concurs with Rutherford that melancholy is inscribed in Australian art and literature. McCulloch’s article ‘Melancholic Wonderlands: Australians Painting Spaces of Terror and Half –Truths’ was written in response to an exhibition of the works of Dr. John Forrest and Terry Matassoni in Fiji at the Double Dialogues Conference (works by these artists are attached to this essay). McCulloch’s article refers to the fact that Sovereignty, expressed in laws relating to land, in Australia, dispersed the sacred; ordained violence; and now, offers a fretwork of references for the melancholic gaze. The gaze when embodied in art may become fixated and pathological, but on the other hand, it gives expression to what otherwise might become repressed. The melancholic gaze at what we might call a hypothetical (and necessarily rhizomic) metaphor of Australian space may have an ‘eye for truth’. This resonance with ‘truth’ is one formed in an Australian childhood. It is one that relates to Freud’s rendering of melancholia which identifies it as a pathological condition in which a person unconsciously keeps a lost object buried and then inflicts punishment on the introjected object for betrayal and abandonment. Freud makes the point that the ‘shadow of the object fell upon the ego’ (Freud, 1912, p. 249); this can be viewed in Forrest’s paintings as he tells a story of abuse, of betrayal, of repression, of fear. Yet at the heart of his paintings there is a fight for survival and recognition that abuse does not obliterate a relentless engagement with desire and a celebration of its insistence and urgency.

In contrast the paintings of Terry Matassoni deal directly with Australian space in the geographical sense. Nevertheless, his works also engage with a melancholic gaze. Matassoni sees himself as an outsider during a childhood in Australia when he was considered a ‘new’ Australian having migrated from Italy. The alienation and estrangement that exist in his work provide a psychological context for his own separateness; in a significant way it would not be an exaggeration to see projected into his suburban landscapes loneliness and sense of loss that he has experienced in Australia as well as his representation of it as the condition for many suburban dwellers.

Violence and Lies

The writers in this issue on Art and Lies bring to their subject the benefits not only of a post-modernist imagination but also insights that stem from a cross-disciplinary approach. They find in philosophical and aesthetic questions answers of a psychological ilk. Sally Blundell in ‘Unspoken Stories: Silence in the Literature of Atrocity’ is concerned with the possibility of art representing terrible human suffering without in some way glorifying or trivialising it. Blundell draws on the writings of J. M. Coetzee, André Brink and Martin Booth and explores how these writers respond to violence while opening up the debate about the representation of violence in art. She writes:

Writing on the barbarity of slavery, the genocide in Namibia and the horrors of World War I Coetzee in Foe (1987), Brink in The Other Side of Silence (2003) and Booth in Islands of Silence (2003) acknowledge that the appropriation of pain through literature can itself be a further act of violation (Blundell, 2007).

Her essay explicates the use of post-modernist techniques in these writers' response to violence. Of particular interest to Blundell is their use of ‘silence’—a profound and self-conscious silence in the form of a mute character adopted by each of them to embody the horror of a real life event.’ (Blundell, 2007). Blundell’s study focuses on the
Colonized victims of post political atrocity and their voicelessness – the colonized, the conquered and the abused. Formerly these figures remained but shadows in canonical texts which reflected the cornerstone of the colonizing culture creating the shadow world for its victims.

Coetzee, Brink and Booth attempt to address this absence of representation and their characters, Alec Marquand, Friday and Hanna-X, maimed and voiceless redirect attention to the ‘subjugated other’. The silence of each these characters perform a function that has formerly been absent, Blundell explains that these writers have overcome the difficulties involved with turning atrocious suffering and torture into art via the use of the mute character whose silence speaks:

‘... in entrusting such violence to the unspeaking form of a mute character these authors avoid the risks inherent in graphic descriptions of the violated or the transgressive assumption of voice, while refusing to support the lie of complete non-disclosure’ (Blundell, 2007)

Blundell points out in representing human violence and its consequent suffering and trauma imposed on fellow human beings that there ‘is no ending to terror. There is no redemption, no satisfactory conclusion’.

Art may not redeem but it does express and in doing so it assists in the grieving process; it marks the spot of oppression and abuse and acts as a warning of the extent of human capacity for violence. Henry Weinfield in his collection of poems The Sorrows of Eros writes a twenty stanza poem titled ‘An Essay on Violence’ (Weinfield, 1999, 29-34). Each stanza ends with a specific aspect of violence: its universality; its lament; its growth; its control over human action; its response to the decrees of history; its being the knee-jerk reaction to injustice; its paradoxical role as pacifier; its ordination by believers and unbelievers, and its antinomies. Weinfield ends with a lament on our natures that history records and ignites:

We are the ones from whom the seed is sown  
And have to bear its burden on our own  
And all alone face up to violence.

Read in these repetitions the lament  
Reverberating through past ages spent  
That we should do or suffer violence.

Artists whose lives have involved political and social violence which reverberates throughout their living experience perhaps receive a specific response to their work. Tracey Moffat known primarily for her work as a photographer and film maker is an indigenous Australian, and a female artist. Moffat nevertheless resists her work being explained under the titles of ‘feminist’ and ‘Aboriginal/Indigenous’. Her resistance to categorization is a cry for dignity, to be received without being pre-processed by a pigeon-holing, indeed to be able to communicate with an audience that receives art anew, as individual and original. Janet Watson’s essay ‘Fractured Realities, Fractured Truths in Tracey Moffatt’s Nice Coloured Girls and Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy’in identifying Moffat’s areas of art confirms this view:

Tracey Moffatt’s still photography and independent filmmaking deftly negotiates and interrogates the complex interfaces of colonialism, patriarchy, sexuality, and ethnicity through a multifaceted lens that reflects the cultural amalgam of her identity as artist, woman, aboriginal and an Australian. While Moffatt’s film art has been variously interpreted through indigenous, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives, such pigeonholing belies the way in which her works deny a unified subjectivity and coherent reality.
Watson's analysis of these films focus on what she refers to as Moffat's 'multiple pathways' where Moffat's 'truth' confronts and subverts past historical representations of race gender and place. Moffat's films are represented as dealing with history in the process of becoming. Watson situates meanings within a national and global setting. Watson elaborates on McLean's view that Moffat 'holds up the mirror of colonialism' to invert the dominant gaze and suggest that the other is looking at us' (1998, 148) by suggesting that the mirror is two-way. She writes:

> We hold each other in a reflexive and thus informative gaze located in an intercultural space. This does not deny the reality of hegemonic relations. Rather it cultivates potentialities of empowerment through subverting and inverting paternalistic and unidirectional vistas of colonial history. Challenging notions of stasis, the domains of cultural production, identity, and history are not fixed but undergo constant transformation - remade, rethought, and reconfigured in and through the ongoing struggle that exists in the multiple interfaces of cultural diversity. In this manner, Moffatt exceeds the demand for authenticity and essential truth in melding multiple 'realities' and subjectivities with the artifices provided by cinematic technology – an ephemeral pastiche of dream, memory, and imaginings – that constructs a hyper-reality composed of postcolonial fragments. Rejecting the canons of traditional narrative and documentary realism in the quest for such aesthetic freedom, Moffatt indeed acknowledges that her work 'has always wanted to be fantastical, probably more like magical realism' (Stretton 2005:284).

Watson is skilful in navigating the contradictory information that follows Moffat's work. Her analysis identifies the fantastical and magical realism in the work and through this mirror she represents the reflexivity of identity and politics indicating always how the will to power in the art enables audiences and artists to see new 'truths' evolving where once only old lies lay.

**Invaders and Lies**

The story of colonialism in Australia has many perspectives. Invaders of Aboriginal land came from all corners of the world. One of the most influential in the society that was to emerge up to post-war immigration was that of the Irish. Sarah Flattley as a third generation Irish Australian, explores the extent to which the stories that have been handed down in her family are after all a pack of lies. Flattley's article ‘Leaving Out the Boring Bits: Writing the Family in the Australian-Irish Diaspora’ is a significant contribution to the field given that there is little contemporary writing on the subject. She writes;

> Much writing on the Australian-Irish Diaspora was made before the emergence of Diaspora as a rigorous field of critical enquiry and articulation. As a result, much of the work is placed in a subjective, interactive field of sentiment and ambiguous statistics rather than in a critical framework. This complements the unstable nature of family stories as malleable oral tradition (Walter, 2001: 206)....diasporic experience is discussed mainly in cultural, political and economic terms in such a way that it ignores the many ways in which culture, politics and economics are gendered and literally 'classified.' Cultural representations of the Irish diasporic woman are few and far between (Gray, 1997: 229).

‘Diaspora’ Flattley advises has become, as ‘MacLachlin, Gray, and Walter point out, a sanitising and homogenising political buzzword in relation to the Irish. Their reservations must be considered in a globalized, capitalist economy. However, while the traps of popular discourse on Diaspora and hybridity and their avoidance of
structural issues must be noted (Kalra, Kuar & Hutnyk, 2005: 15), these arguments lack a consideration of the generational nature of Diaspora. Kalra, Kuar & Hutnyk posit that discarding Diaspora 'marks groups who have never migrated but are the offspring of migrants as not belonging to a particular place' (2005: 14).

Flattley explores the historical and political reasons that the subject of the 'Irish Diaspora 'are oppositional, problematic and activating agents in contemporary discourse'. Flattley’s article demonstrates that a rendition of what it is to be Irish, and whether the Irish can be seen as victims or underdogs is determined by the choices one makes in relation to all material available. The choice involved is between which stories you choose to listen to and which ones that you choose to forget . Flattley explores the stories that she has chosen to remember indicating in the process the ramifications of believing the 'lie' and burying the 'truth'.

**Fiction: The Truth of Lies**

Earlier in this essay I drew attention to how one must avoid confusing the voice of a character with his creator, for example, Meursault with Camus, or Marlowe with Conrad. Ron Goodrich’s essay ‘Truths in Narrative Fiction?’ deals specifically with this problem of determining truths in fiction and where exactly the character sits in relation to truth-telling. Goodrich’s essay demonstrates, despite its prime interest in literary constructions, how this question is the province of the linguist and the philosopher. Goodrich clarifies from the outset that an expression or utterance cannot be deemed true or false in language unless it is being used to make a true or false assertion, or (if this is preferred) to express a true or false proposition (Strawson, 1950, p. 7). Goodrich investigates the problems associated with determining truth in fiction by analysing concepts of narrative and fiction, authorial intentions and reader’s imagination by probing Handel Richardson’s 1910 novel, The Getting of Wisdom. The focus is on ‘the seventeenth of its twenty-five chapters which exposes the protagonist, Laura Tweedle Rambotham, to be lying to her wealthier school peers in her desperate quest for their acceptance’ (Goodrich, 2007). Goodrich chooses a chapter relevant to the theme of this issue being thematically framed by an epigraph culled from Part Four of Friedrich Nietzsche’s Also Sprach Zarathustra (1885): ‘He who cannot lie does not know what truth is...’ (trans. Michael Ackland).

Goodrich emphasizes that the point of significance of the tale is of crucial concern in seeking a means of identifying any kind of truth in written and spoken language. The complexity of the search for meaning is dramatized in this article and a glimpse of that complexity and its value for those dealing with deconstructing language of all kinds, whether termed fiction or not, is expressed in the following excerpt:

So, when narrative fiction is shaped by what its author intends it to undertake, then we are implying that he or she is not asserting that the tale is in fact the case. Rather, as John Searle (1975) suggests, he or she is basically pretending to do so. Yet, pretended assertions are compatible with mimicking someone not pretending. Therefore, perhaps it would be more accurate to say with Nicholas Wolterstorff (1980, pp. 219-234) that the author stops short of genuine assertion in at least one respect. He or she is intending readers to make-believe or imagine what is narrated, although that, in turn, as Davies (1996, p. 53) postulates, may well "require a prior determination" about what the author "wants us to believe."

Whether readers self-consciously have to include their relationship to the narrative as part of their imaginative engagement with its protagonists and their actions is optional; certainly, it seems, less experienced or younger readers rarely do. However, the reader’s relationship to the author is another matter. When talking of the author’s intentions, there need be no implication that these must be construed as his or her mental plan,
preconception, or projection of the narrative in its entirety, "envisaged," as Richard Wollheim (1987, p. 18) expresses it, "as a kind of internal command addressed to [her- or] himself." Rather, the reader's response is attuned to the author's intentions relevant to and causally involved in the creation of the narrative. Nor, when referring to authorial intentions, are we necessarily trapped in what M.C. Beardsley and W.K. Wimsatt influentially dubbed the "intentional fallacy," namely, that, when judging an author's "performance, we must know what he [or she] intended" (1946, p. 4); an evaluative state of affairs they condemn because "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work" (Goodrich, 2008).

Goodrich's paper goes a long way to persuade us that discerning truth or lies in, for example a novel, involves less emphasis on what is 'in' the fiction but rather how truth and lies are dealt with through literature. This essay exemplifies that unlocking meaning, let alone its truth, involves philosophical insights that the most challenging and innovative literary analysis accesses.

This philosophical approach is evident in Domique Hecq's contribution to this issue where she brings a Lacanian analysis to her subject. Hecq's essay 'The Truth Always Lies Elsewhere: The Case of the Ravishing of Lol.V. Stein' starts with a clear rendering of what is original in Lacan's thought and extends this insight in order to make a further hypothesis. Hecq refers to The Knowledge of the Psychoanalyst, and quotes Lacan's view that 'the symptom has the sense of value of truth' (Lacan, 1971/1972: 27). Hecq suggests that 'In this sense, one might view writing as a symptomatic act that bears upon the question of truth, but what truth? For Lacan, to translate the symptom into value of truth is 'to give to whatever proposition one encounters its relation to a jouissance,' that is, to a form of enjoyment that is often closer to pain than to pleasure' (Hecq, 2008).

Hecq chooses Marquerite Duras' La Ravissement de Lol. V to analyse in order to show how this particular text in its expression of anxiety is not merely represented in the narrative voice but as Lacan argued is 'of the narrative as a whole' (Lacan, 2001: 192). Hecq demonstrates how a Lacanian approach to this text enriches a reading of Duras' work giving 'a discursive existence to her created character'. Hecq shows how Lacan's view 'of the true' and 'that it is only able to appear in its perversion': It 'cannot manifest as itself; it can only be half-said in its twisted pathway through the predicates, that is, though literal lies' (Hecq, 2007).

Hecq's choice of Duras' novel to explicate and further develop his ideas in her application of them is a canny one. Her article retells the plot of the work in a manner that engages a reader's response. Like Goodrich in his analysis of The Getting of Wisdom, Hecq is able to deal with the 'lies' and 'truth' of fiction in an original way enabling a reader to appreciate the puzzles of written language. One learns of the diversity of possible 'truths' by being guided through the multiple functions of narrators and their relationship with the narrative as a whole; her selection of the following from one of the narrator's perspectives illustrates this:

"Now, I alone of all these perverters of truth know this: that I know nothing. That was my initial discovery about her: to know nothing about Lol V. Stein was already to know her. One could, it seemed to me, know even less about her, less and less about Lol V. Stein (Duras, 1966: 72; translation modified).

Hecq argues in the Lacanian mould that the discordance between knowledge and being means that rather than a truth being repressed or censored identifying it is in fact impossible. What one can do though by following Hecq's analysis of Duras' work is find what is possible. This essay not only explicates what is possible in terms of making some kind of sense of the narrative as a whole, which does not present the main
character as something to be understood, it also explains how this view can be applied to writing itself. Indeed rather than writing or this particular work offering up the Freudian uncanny as a way of accessing the secret that would be ‘better kept secret’, Hecq entertains the view that in this instance the writing succeeds as part of its strategy to keep its secrets.

As Hecq writes:

We can affirm with Freud that literary writing is able to provoke and show something regarding the uncanny effects of such relations to the object. I would argue, however, that this novel does not provoke an uncanny effect, due to both the thematic presentation and the structural enactment in the writing of relations of distance and proximity. In this way Duras’ recuperation of an object through art approaches but also mitigates the effects of the uncanny: that is, something in the realm of what should have remained secret and hidden does in fact remain so. (Hecq, 2007).

The Discursive Mode: Satire through Art and Text

John Forrest and Les Morgan practice in their articles a double dialogue between the written word and paintings attempting perhaps to argue that where writing locates the locus of facts and fiction it may be the paintings that come closest to expressing that which ‘the facts’ or ‘the writing’ is unable to disclose.

Forrest’s article ‘Art and the Scalpel’ includes excerpts from his recent book Hollywood Flesh currently in the process of finding a publisher. The protagonist of this work is Jonathon Wood who has the unusual, though strangely complementary talents of both a surgeon and a painter. The objects of his work are the faces and bodies of Hollywood-starlets/actors/producers/directors who see the scalpel as a means towards achieving eternal youth. Whilst Wood is prepared to offer them this mask on the operating table, on his canvases they become objects of scorn. The scorn comes in the guise of satire, the resultant laughter at times uncomfortable when the worst affects of capitalism and the commoditization of the body find their targets. Forrest writes:

At the source of all construction there is a necessary connection between "reality" and "artifice". This paper will explore the ontology and game playing behind the artifice of a plastic surgeon/painter. The protagonist’s identity is fluid as is the identity of the subjects to his scalpel. Hollywood is up for analysis and it will be the satirical edge of the pen and paintbrush that subverts advantages gained by the surgeon’s knife as much as a world at large that believes "appearance is all".

The narrative perspective in this article is designed to deceive – to catch us all out- as we happily suspend disbelief and accept that John Forrest tells his story because as a PhD student researching Hollywood visual narrative structures he met the notorious John Wood and was able to get copies of his satirical drawings, paintings and cartoons. In the end it probably is not important that John Wood does not exist that he is in fact a fictional though ‘literal’ John Forrest. What remains with the reader of the article and the viewer of the art-work is the dialogue between image and text and the power of text and image in the satiric mode to represent the frailties of human beings in their attempt to avoid facing the unbearable truth of their mortality.

Whereas Forrest explicates the lies people indulge in when empowered by the excesses of capitalism, Les Morgan in ‘Please Explain’ chooses an Australian political figure Pauline Hanson as the target of his satire. Hanson’s short-lived popularity emerged from a section of bigoted and conservative Australians; it alerted Australians that there was a virulent racism existent in Australia towards indigenous Australians as well as Australians whose country of origin was not Anglo-Celtic. This of course was
not unknown to Australians but it was essentially ignored perhaps with some awareness that at the heart of Australian colonial history there lay reason for guilt and shame. Hansen's blatant racism was barely disguised on her political platform as 'Giving a voice to the Australian battlers'. It was a cunning choice as she knew her 'Australian battlers' to be suffering economic decline; she argued their decline was particularly difficult to accept when taxes were given to Aboriginals and other migrants. Her bigoted, uninformed stand served in the end to force Australians to be accountable for a society in which large minorities (in particular Aboriginals) were disadvantaged socially, politically and economically. Morgan outlines his position of attack:

In a television interview on 60 Minutes, Pauline Hanson was asked by the host Tracey Curro if she was xenophobic, to which Hanson replied 'Please explain'. Following this interview, 'Please explain' became associated with Hanson, largely for the purposes of ridicule (Wilmoth, (1998); Maxine McKew and Lateline; The Age. Melbourne: 45-46). This phrase has also come to represent my diasporic perception and the solution to my artistic identity crisis. Its formation was a response to the emergence in Queensland of far-right politician Pauline Hanson’s One Nation party during the years 1995-2001. I propose that Hansonism, like Powellism in 1970s Britain, created a moral panic that resulted in race becoming a signifier of a wider crisis. In Hanson’s case, the crisis supposedly involved the abandonment and betrayal of white Australians. The notion of white decline surfaced in the political discourse of grievance and resentment, and formed the social and political impetus for my practices of resistance and critique from a diasporic perspective. In this paper I discuss how the combination of political and aesthetic components in my art practice came to be utilised to oppose Hansonism, and so they were formative to my positioning as a diasporic artist and to the forging of a new relationship between art, politics and figurative painting.

Morgan’s paintings uncover lies and serve to pin-point the racist and anti-multicultural aspects of Hansen’s stand, her arbitrary notions of what an Australian nation means and her capacity to invigorate and sponsor the less savoury values of an ‘old’ Australia when confronted with a new one.

Morgan’s article does dialogue with six of his paintings included in the text. His article explicates his art indicating the inter-textuality of his work, influences, his chosen style and the political context that frames them. For example ‘Queenslanders’ inspired by Thomas Gainsborough’s ‘Mr. and Mrs Andrews’ (1758) presents two contrasting inhabitants of the land. There is the family who has wealth, ownership and control of property; alongside the arrival of ‘new’ Australians (boat people) seeking asylum from tyrannical regimes. There are two kinds of Queenslanders represented in this painting: an antagonistic relationship is presented with old Australians being threatened by new Australians.

**Biography and Lies**

Writing a biography begins with the question: What is the truth? What are the lies? To commit to writing about the life of another is in many senses a preposterous action - it presupposes that an outsider may actually albeit by careful research be able to represent another person’s life accurately.

Rob Haysom in his article ‘Arnold Shore: The Man and the Myth’ gives a privileged look into his recent biography on an Australian artist who, although receiving numerous awards for his work in his life-time, has been side-lined in current histories of Australian artists. Haysom argues the case for his inclusion indicating that his demise in the public is an anomaly and points to the consideration that Art Histories are determined by methods of selection and historical accident which might be considered ‘lies’ by
omission. Haysom draws on Raymond Williams writings on the subject (1975, p. 26) referring to the latter’s conception that the recording of a particular time and place in being selective is inevitably interpretative. Haysom notes that this tradition inevitably ignores aspects of the lived culture as it acknowledges and promotes particular artists and writers and omits others.

Gauging by Haysom’s research on Arnold Shore this does seem to be the case. Arnold Shore, author of numerous essays on the art of his time, promoter and mentor of well known artists, and teacher, was primarily a painter who contributed in a substantial way to Australian landscape paintings. Haysom’s coverage of Shore’s life includes an overview of his life from childhood to his death. His research involves accessing autobiographical manuscripts written throughout the life that deal as much with his childhood and education as they deal with his responses to key professional periods throughout his career. Haysom peppers his analysis and coverage with the view that any biographical work is problematic given the arbitrary relationship between cause and effect whether in reference to the content of his art-work and his personal life or in relation to key periods in his professional life as a teacher, writer and mentor and his personal and professional associations. Indeed Haysom ends his article by quoting Beckett’s view of the autobiographical and/or biographical subject:

Even on the rare occasions when word and gesture happen to be valid expressions of personality, they lose their significance on their passage through the cataract of the personality that is opposed to them. Either we speak and act for ourselves – in which case speech and action are distorted and emptied of their meanings by an intelligence that is not ours, or else we speak and act for others – in which case we speak and act a lie.’ (Beckett, 1931:64)

David Brooks takes another approach to biography. His article ‘Notebooks’ takes the form of notes that he writes in response to the literary world, its productions, its excesses and its enigmas. His essay in this issue is of course a selection and focuses on his views of what biographies must be or perhaps, fairer to say, what they must avoid leaving out. His article begins with his disappointment that a recent biographical text failed to deal with the more personal life of a poet who was being presented. Brooks in submitting this article to this journal, out of courtesy, I suspect deleted the name of the author of the text and the subject of it. As the book referred to is indeed by the writer of this essay (Ann McCulloch) and the text is Dance of the Nomad: A Study of The Selected Notebooks of A. D. Hope, I consider it crucial that in introducing Brooks' ideas I should contextualise my comments within an honest frame.

Brooks’ view that Dance of the Nomad did not deal with the personal life of a man but rather the man as some kind of ‘intellectual equation’ is, when seeing it from Brook’s perspective, both true and false. It is true that the text did not express an interest in tying life’s personal issues with particular poems in a kind of cause and effect relation. I simply was not interested in this problematic connection for reasons that go beyond the intentional fallacy, though include it as well. However I was interested in the intellectual environment which gave rise to Hope’s poetry and how his need for ‘detachment’ was not only rationalized and implemented by him but also subverted consciously and unconsciously. The subversions are as present in his words, his contradictions and his pathologies as is his mission to protect a poem from the adventurous spirit of the biographer with a scalpel in his/her hand. I tend to think that the ‘best’ biography of A. D. Hope would be one done by Brooks and myself in order that we would curb each other’s excesses and fears and find perhaps that story that does not escape behind its shadow. I do know that between the two of us we hold those stories yet to be told.

Interestingly, Brooks article gives some excellent reasons to be suspicious of these connections between the life acted out and the resultant poem despite his belief in the connection and his desire to overcome the obstacles that prevent one from embracing it as a biographical writer or critic. Brooks’ essay, comprising of notes that he has
brought to the subject of 'truth' and 'lies' is a fascinating one and unique in this collection in that it dares to explore the parts of ourselves that frighten us whether as poets or critics. His analysis of the difficulties when truly accessing and representing the inner lives of others and ourselves is insightful. In response to other works he discusses the barriers that all people dealing with the biographical subject encounter:

149. 22.IX.94

Once again the attempt to gather up something here even while it is sliding away, in this case reflections, 20/IX, while I was having lunch with Re and what I’ve earlier called the Mechanism of Shame, though not so much the poetics here as the biography, and the barriers put up to the biographer. The strange dynamic or interrelation between the desire for intimacy, confession and the things to be shared or confessed, the way the one breeds or multiplies the other in the very process of thwarting it. That the desire to be open, meeting its inevitable frustration, creates at once a further thing one will wish to be open about, and a further thing one cannot confess. A kind of impossibility of intimacy is at the heart of this. But is intimacy impossible – this kind of whole, open intimacy – or it is only impossible for some? And what is its connection with that full intimacy, that full opening or exposure of the self that Poe says, could it be done, would amount to/produce a masterpiece?1 Shame, seeking its opposite, creating more shame, keeping the artist outcast... The constant desire, throughout one’s adult life, for someone one can be truly, uninhibitedly honest with, up against the discovery that one is inhibited, seduced into falsehood by tenderness, desire not to wound, the (apparent) need to mask truth in order to sustain the friend-ship/love in the first place. As if these things – friendship, love – are almost by definition incompatible with full disclosure.

Brooks goes further and dares to address what many consider ‘unsayable’ in our own life stories and the stories of others:

152. 8.X.94

How much of literary history, as of any other history, is lubricated by – floating on a virtual sea of – semen, vaginal secretions, blood, the way that desire, their ether, lubricates the mind, imagination, intellect, of the scientist as much as the writer, the politician as much as the poet or the metaphysician. And how much commentary upon it dare not look this in the face? How much new theory exists to suppress it, every bit as much as – more than – the old, theory which, on the other hand, extols the textual body. And what toxins are preserved – never identified – as a consequence?

Poetic Vision: The lessons on Lies from the past

I end this overview of the contributions to Double Dialogues Issue 9 with a brief discussion of Louise Fairfax’ essay ‘The Lie of Objective Reality: The Related Agon of Blake, Goethe and Nietzsche’ and by returning to an earlier essay of this collection: Vijay Mishra’s ‘The Influence of Kalidasa on Shakespeare’: the Genre of the keynote address and the story of a lie’.

Fairfax’ article provides a philosophical context for all articles in this edition. It reminds us not only of the ways in which writers here have framed their discourse within a history of ideas, and how each writer has the benefit of working within the provisional nature of discourse endemic to each era, but also pinpoints the value of what might be called the ‘poetic vision’ Fairfax accesses the visions of Goethe, Blake and Nietzsche and demonstrates how the visions of the past still live amongst us. These three artists
she correctly identifies as the poets and thinkers that first questioned the truth of ‘objective reality’. She writes:

Remnants of this attitude of objective reality remain in evidence today, but what I wish to consider, as my title suggests, is the broader issue of the lie of objectivity. In particular, I wish to discuss the contributions to the dismantling of this lie made by William Blake and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe at the close of the 1700s and Friedrich Nietzsche in the century that followed, and I wish to draw new connections between these three, all of whom understood that a science or a moral code that demands that we regard the world as a given reality is a lie. In all three cases, their fight against the lie is eloquent and passionate.

Fairfax explores the opposition that Nietzsche, Goethe and Blake posed to the ‘truths’ of the bible and to its resultant doctrine of Christianity and the institution of the Church. Her discourse analyses the emergence of moral relativity in the history of ideas and how they were represented in art. She draws on moral philosophy to explicate constructions of concepts of good and evil quoting Blake’s response to a re-conception of such concepts as contraries:

‘From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy’ (1790: 34).

Connection with Nietzsche follow and Fairfax explores how he recognized Blake’s ‘passivity’ as life denying (1886/1887: 767 & 900). Fairfax draws from Nietzsche’s works to demonstrate his view that all theories have ‘feet of clay’ and that values need to undergo re-evaluation. Fairfax explores the ways in which Nietzsche, Blake and Goethe reverse the accepted ideas of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in their societies exploring for example Goethe’s distrust of axioms of truth. She writes:

Goethe also demonstrates the constructed nature of ideals when he reverses values in his poem Pariah (1821: 361-367), and overturns the conventional categories of Mediator and Magdalen. The mutability of truth and falsehood is also reflected in Goethe’s comment to Hegel that one can reverse true and false (18th October 1827: 670). For these poets, nothing belongs ipso facto to a pre-assigned, absolute category.

What is of particular interest in the bringing of these writers/artists together is recognizing the extent to which each of them distrusted the ‘truth’ of language long before it became a philosophical imperative to do so. Fairfax invokes the words of Goethe’s Mephistopheles who ‘argues, it doesn’t matter what name you give something, say, happiness, heart, God. Such things are interchangeable. Feeling is what is important (thus introducing the concept of self-reference – reference to inner state rather than outer absolute). Names are as solid as smoke; they are an outer, removable attachment’ (Fairfax, 2008).

This essay reminds us that thinkers, long before contemporary times, were pitting themselves against the idea of absolute truths that were fundamental to the construction of social and moral values. It reminds us further of the ways in which our own times can be seen to be bound to the continual perpetration of the lie of objective truth.

The Key-note Address and the Bird’s-eye View

Many of these articles had their origins in the Double Dialogues conference on ‘Art & Lies’ in Suva, Fiji, 2007. Vijay Mishra opened this conference with a key-note address which thematically and philosophically leads the way in suggesting how we may read
the following essays on ‘Art & Lies’. Mishra’s paper is playful yet in the sense that humour and satire are serious issues. His focus on the antics of presenters of key-note addresses may be satirical in intent but equally his ploy is to hypnotise his audience towards considering whether we can identify what is ‘uncanny’ here and what is more consciously hidden. The fact that he tells us that we are subject to this hypnotic induction does not make us less likely to fall into the trance. This is, of course, the condition of being asked to consider how why and when art lies and when these ‘lies’ are indeed the nearest one gets to truth.

This indeed is the case. Although all contributors to this issue identify a lie that exists in their particular view of art, each contributor was keen to indicate that for them truth, however slippery, was being sought: McCulloch argued that at least in some tragic art there may be a moment of sublime insight into truth even though the truth will blind; Rutherford demonstrates that recognising the extent to which melancholia haunts our land and our poetics is a means of touching concealed truths; Blundell looks for a way that the truth of human suffering can be represented without glorifying or trivializing it; Watson pleads for the truth of Tracey Moffat’s work to be allowed to emerge without crippling categorizations pertaining to race and gender dictating its reception; Flattley questions whether diasporic criticism has faced all truth dealing with the displaced; Goodrich guides us to the truth that can be found through literature rather than in it; Hiecq argues for a truth that is seen in a narrative as a whole, Forrest and Morgan unmask the truth as they satirize the lie; Haysom uncovers the truth of Arnold Shore’s place in Australian Art History; Brooks explores the reasons that truths in biographical writing are crucial despite the dangers they incur and Fairfax argues for the truths that come with the recognition that there are no absolute ones.

Mishra’s essay approaches the subject in an inter-disciplinary mode drawing from philosophy, linguistics and works of literature across cultures and across time. Indeed this essay succeeds in representing most of the scholarly dilemmas concerned with the nature of the lie. Scholarship itself is questioned with the pertinent question: What is the truth of critical judgement? One is advised to be aware of the collusion between judgement of value and principle of ethics when attempting to answer this question. Mishra looks at the origins of the word and explores applications in English, Hindi and Fijian noting the different understandings across cultures and seeks to explore if the word ‘lie’ in each of these cultures can avoid ‘metaphysical baggage’ or re-coding when ‘sacred ’ texts, for the example, the bible, are translated into another language. Mishra’s speaks of his return to the place where as a young person he first read the bible in Hindi. He now asks whether this translation recoded it to make the text less alien and less threatening to the Hindi reader.

Language, Mishra illustrates, tends to avoid the lie knowing its visceral qualities; the extent to which it is utilised in writings in its many meanings and its applications and its reception to its use as a pun. The latter point is illustrated well in Mishra’s paper in his analysis of a scene from Hamlet. Puns themselves indicate the uncanny quality of the word ‘lie’ making it often perform on the cusp of ‘truth’ and ‘untruth’. In literature as in life characters ‘perform’ lies as well as tell them consciously. And to add another ‘truth’ into the recipe of ‘making a lie’ it is to be remembered that self-deception cannot be construed as a lie.

Conrad’s The Heart of Darkness as Mishra illustrates is a seminal text when we confront the nature of the ‘lie’. Kurtz we are shown is able to grasp a truth only in death. Kurtz’ dying words ‘The Horror, The Horror’ embody a hidden lie about the world which Mishra notes ‘to confront in English is too great a horror and this is what Kurtz does’. Marlow’s subsequent lie about Kurtz’ last words is not unlike the way the art of tragedy distils truth with the ‘veil of illusion’ which hides the unbearable truth of our world from us. However as a tragic protagonist has a fleeting view of the truth before it is veiled so Kurtz gives us knowledge of the world that we find unbearable. Marlow has no option it seems but to lie to the beloved even though as he does he feels the full
dilemma of his lie and that it has the smell of death to it. In dealing with ‘Art & Lies’ this awareness of ‘the lie’ that we prefer not to know, that we bury and that we hide from with a fierce relentlessness, has been a common thread in the essays of this journal issue.

Mishra’s conclusion is a lengthy one so allow me to select: He writes: 'Let me conclude differently, bringing the two-pronged strategies used thus far together, suggesting that lies in literature are not determinate but reflective judgments on the lie. To oppose veracity and the lie in literature is to distort how meaning is constructed in the work of art (Mishra, 2008). In agreeing with Mishra I would add to this that what these contributions to the subject indicate is that art whether presented in words or images goes perhaps further than the benefits of the reflective judgement that, in its best form, ‘takes us to something’- something perhaps ‘other’ or ‘new’. Art deals with the ‘inexpressible’ fuelled as it is with the powers of ‘metaphor’ Art does not define the truth or the lie, but it does in its magical forms, at least, however fleetingly, ‘apprehend’ it in new and productive ways.

And one is left with Mishra’s provocative, ambiguous, playful, though deadly serious conclusion to his keynote address on the subject of ‘Art & Lies’. The question may not merely be ‘were we hypnotized by his discourse’ but also by other debates published in this journal?:

The Answer?

A keynote address [and other essays in this journal issue] hypnotically induces you to believe in literature [and Art] as a lie, which is not a lie'.

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