



HUMANITIES AUSTRALIA

THE JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF THE HUMANITIES

12 / 2021



ALASTAIR BLANSHARD
PAUL EGGERT
BRIDGET GRIFFEN-FOLEY

BILLY GRIFFITHS
MARIAN MAGUIRE

LIBBY ROBIN
NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE
CATHERINE SPECK

THE ACADEMY COUNCIL

President
Lesley Head

Honorary Secretary
Elizabeth Minchin

Honorary Treasurer
Richard Waterhouse

Vice-Presidents
Elizabeth Minchin
Louise Edwards

Editor
Graham Tulloch

International Secretary
Louise Edwards

Immediate Past President
Joy Damousi

Ordinary Members
Duncan Ivison
Jennifer Milam
Ingrid Piller
Julian Thomas
Sean Ulm

CONTACT DETAILS

For further information about the Australian Academy of the Humanities, contact us:

Email
enquiries@humanities.org.au

Web
humanities.org.au

Telephone
(+61 2) 6125 9860

EDITORIAL/PRODUCTION

Academy Editor
Graham Tulloch

Design and Layout
Gillian Cosgrove

Editorial Support
Liz Bradtke

Printing
New Millenium Print, Canberra

Cover illustration
Alexander Boynes, Mandy Martin, Tristen Parr, *Luminous Relic* (stills), 2017. If you would like to join supporters of the Mandy Martin Climarte Fellowship, visit <<https://climarte.org/news/vale-mandy-martin/>>. Further reading: <<https://insidestory.org.au/the-beauty-and-the-terror/>>

© 2021 Australian Academy of the Humanities and individual contributors

ISSN 1837-8064

Funding for the production of this publication has been provided by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment or the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

The illustrations and certain identified inclusions in the text are held under separate copyright and may not be reproduced in any form without the permission of the respective copyright holders. Every reasonable effort has been made to contact relevant copyright holders for illustrative material in this journal. Where this has not proved possible, the copyright holders are invited to contact the publisher.

Welcome

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 12th edition of the Australian Academy of the Humanities' flagship publication, *Humanities Australia*, edited by Graham Tulloch FAHA.

For over 50 years, the Academy has been dedicated to advancing scholarship and promoting understanding of the humanities across our education and research sectors, and in the broader community. Founded by Royal Charter in 1969, the Academy now comprises over six hundred Fellows elected on the basis of the excellence and impact of their scholarship. Our Fellows have been recognised nationally and internationally for outstanding work in the disciplines of archaeology, Asian and European studies, classical and modern literature, cultural and communication studies, language and linguistics, philosophy, the arts, history and religion.

The world continues to face a range of urgent challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the increasing effects of climate change. At the same time, humanities disciplines are under severe strain in many of our universities, libraries, archives, museums and galleries. It is therefore more essential than ever that insights from how cultures and values have changed over time, and vary in the present, and research that demonstrates how the humanities help us shape different and possible human futures, are given as many platforms as possible.

This year's issue of *Humanities Australia* once again features essays, reflections and fiction by our Fellows that showcase this kind of research in action. As in previous years, it also features edited versions of the Trendall and the Hancock lectures, and we are delighted to be able to provide a platform for readers to engage with these timely and compelling addresses.

I hope you will enjoy reading this very special 12th edition of *Humanities Australia*. It offers a small sample of the outstanding research being undertaken in our disciplines.

Graham Tulloch is stepping down as Editor after five years, and we thank him for his tireless efforts. This edition is a fitting finale to his work in this important role. ¶



LESLEY HEAD FASSA FAHA
President, Australian Academy
of the Humanities, 2020–

HUMANITIES AUSTRALIA

THE JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF THE HUMANITIES

- 2 **Editor's Introduction**
GRAHAM TULLOCH
- 5 **#ArtsforSurvival**
LIBBY ROBIN
- 15 **Were the Ancient Athenians Ever Lonely?**
ALASTAIR J.L. BLANSHARD
- 23 **Letters to Maggie, Roy and HG**
BRIDGET GRIFFEN-FOLEY
- 32 **A Colonial Surface Scatter: Deepening Histories
at Jiigurru/Walmbaar (Lizard Island)**
BILLY GRIFFITHS
- 43 **Beer Lines**
NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE
- 48 **Maralinga: Thunder Raining Poison**
CATHERINE SPECK
- 59 **The Present, the Past and the Work**
PAUL EGGERT
- 68 **Straying from Myth
The 22nd A.D. Trendall Lecture**
MARIAN MAGUIRE



Editor's Introduction

GRAHAM TULLOCH

WITH ONE SMALL CHANGE—from '2020' to '2021'—I can begin my introduction to this year's issue of *Humanities Australia* in the same words as last year: 'This year, 2020, has been a tumultuous year for the world to which Australia has added its own particular troubles and concerns.' I then went on to mention the bushfires, the emergence of Covid-19 with its threats to lives and livelihoods (including in the arts and universities), heightened tensions with China, renewed attention to Indigenous disadvantage (highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement) and government funding proposals that called into question the value of key humanities disciplines. Thankfully, there have not been the same mega-bushfires (although the threat of bushfires exacerbated by climate change is still very much there) but the other troubles of last year remain, albeit with a change of emphasis. Covid-19 has dominated this year to a greater extent even than last but Indigenous disadvantage, tensions with China and questions about the value and status of the humanities and of the arts remain.

This year's *Humanities Australia* again demonstrates the experience and effectiveness of the humanities in addressing these current challenges but the contributions also remind us that our complex world is not defined by these prominent issues alone. That said, the first contribution deals directly with both the epidemic and the value of the arts in times of crisis. Libby Robin offers a very personal account of her exploration of the responses of and to the arts in the first Covid-19 year. Her article describes not only the state of the

arts and how they responded to the effects of the epidemic on both artists and their audiences but also the process by which she went about exploring this issue. Victoria in 2020 suffered eight months of lockdown and it is from this extreme viewpoint that she considers how the arts reacted to Covid-19 and other crises of the year. There is much that is depressing in the picture she draws, but there is also much that is inspiring. In the face of the epidemic communities confined to their homes turned to the arts. At the same time the arts and cultural institutions reinvented themselves, finding new ways of connecting with and supporting the broader community. Ultimately she concludes that 'Creativity has a future. It remains a place for hope, for meaning and—I argue—for economic, cultural and human growth'.

By way of contrast to this direct confrontation with the first Covid-19 year, Alastair Blanshard comes indirectly at a contemporary issue which had particular resonance in the year of lockdown and isolation. Posing the question 'Were the Ancient Athenians ever lonely?' he begins with Émile Durkheim's identification of loneliness as a peculiarly modern phenomenon. After considering the communal nature of living in urban Athens he argues that the scope for loneliness was limited in this society since 'In ancient Athens, you were almost never alone.' Even in the country, agricultural labour was a shared activity so that there, too, loneliness had little scope. What concerned people was not loneliness but misanthropy, the misanthrope being someone who does not want to join in

communal living. There is, however, one group that did live in isolation, shepherds. This proves to be a privileged position: in Ancient Greece the gods appear without disguise only to isolated individuals. Hence shepherds are the group who most often experience epiphany. All this leads to a balanced conclusion: studying the lifestyle of Ancient Athens reminds us of the benefits of communal living in combating loneliness, but at the same time 'we don't want to lose the pleasures of solitude. After all, as the Greeks remind us, this is the state in which we are most likely to encounter the divine.'

Bridget Griffen-Foley moves outside the confines of our current challenges into the world of radio and television. She uses the fanmail received by Ruth Cracknell, star of *Mother and Son*, and by John Doyle and Greig Pickhaver, who appeared as Roy Slaven and HG Nelson in *This Sporting Life*, to reveal a vibrant interaction between these extremely popular stars and Australian audiences. Cracknell's brilliant performance as Maggie Bear brought her nation-wide recognition and was greeted with enormous warmth, with the fanmail revealing a rich range of responses. Similarly the marvellous pairing of Roy and HG attracted a huge number of admirers, many of them eager to make contact. It is heartening to know that Cracknell responded personally to all her fanmail, as did Doyle and Pickhaver. The archive of fanmail received by these much loved stars reveals itself as a rich resource for understanding Australian audiences' reaction to some key works of television and radio.

Billy Griffiths begins his article with a vivid evocation of his experiences working with archaeologists on Lizard Island, part of the ancestral country of the Dinggaal people, who knew the group of islands of which it is a part as 'Jiigurru' or 'Walmbaar', but he moves on to a consideration of one of the many frontier myths which have overlaid Indigenous stories of the land. Lizard Island has become associated with the story of Mary Watson, who died after an attack on her absent husband's trepang collecting depot. Two Chinese workers also died in or after the attack but have fallen out of the story, as have the killings of Aboriginal people that followed, although they were more

or less openly acknowledged in the press of the time, being presented, however, merely as just reprisals without any mention of the colonising land grab they enabled. This is one of the multitude of stories of frontier violence which underlie contemporary Indigenous disadvantage: they need to be told if we are to achieve the truth-telling called for in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

Nicholas Shakespeare's 'Beer Lines' brings us back to the present but immediately takes us back to a fourteenth-century Wiltshire pub, then further back to a site where Romano-Britons quarried stone and finally further back still to an Ancient British fort. From there the writer moves forward, through a chain linking amongst other things his former publisher, a painting which reminds him of Tasmania, 'an island which has long been part of my life', and Patrick White, to arrive again at the present. It is a story of coincidences, as so many of the best stories are. Fascinating as a narrative, it also reminds us forcefully of the global interconnectedness of our culture in both the past and the present.

Catherine Speck's starting point is the Australian television series *Operation Buffalo* screened in 2020. Avowedly a work of 'historical fiction' in which nevertheless 'a lot of the really bad history actually happened', the series served, if nothing else, to bring the nuclear tests at Maralinga back to the forefront of the minds of its audience. While many of the older generation no doubt remember the tests, the memory has been much more vivid and painful for the Anangu people on whose land they took place and the article ends with a discussion of the recent powerful work of Aboriginal artists that recalls the tests and their devastating effect on the Anangu country and people. However what has been largely forgotten, though also covered in the article, are the protests at the time against the choice of the test site. Despite the strength of campaigns by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, they were unsuccessful. Taking into account the subservience of the Australian government to British needs and the indifference of the British themselves (the 'ultimate colonisers' as Speck calls them) to the plight of the people who had inhabited the land

for millenia, it provides a sharp reminder of the continuing legacy of colonisation.

Paul Eggert addresses the relationship of past and present, a notion which lies beneath many of the articles in this issue of the journal. His particular concern is the twin activities of scholarly editing of literary texts and conservation of buildings and works of art. He begins with a Thomas Hardy poem about the presence of the past in the present and the presence of the present in our view of the past. Hardy is an apt choice as he was an architect restoring medieval buildings before he became a famous novelist and poet. Tracing the evolution, over the last forty years or so, of ideas about how literary, artistic and architectural works should be edited, conserved, or curated, the article leads us to a recognition that there is no fixed and ideal state of any work of art to which it can be returned and that editors, conservators, or curators can only do their best to present the work of the past in a way that resonates with their own present. To quote: 'Works have lives: all being well, those lives are the conserved object's passport into the future and they are ours into the past.'

Finally Marian Maguire returns us both to frontier violence, colonisation, and Indigenous dispossession and to the Ancient Greeks in her written up version of her 2020 Trendall Lecture. Working from the intriguing notion of combining New Zealand colonial history with Ancient Greek vase painting she has produced a series of stunning images covering such subjects as the encounter of Captain Cook with the Indigenous people of the land he named New Zealand (in *The Odyssey of Captain Cook*) and the occupation of the land by colonists (in *The Labours of Herakles*) where Herakles is 'my stand-in for the British settler'. Her reflections on this artistic endeavour have raised questions about myths and stories including 'whether one could import myth into a land already replete with myth' and 'Can land hold multiple stories or does one displace another?' Discussing the Land Wars she provides a telling parallel to Billy Griffiths's story of how colonists glossed over the violent taking of Lizard Island from the Dingaal people with the heroic story of Mary Watson. In New

Zealand, 'Piece by piece the land was surveyed. In order to ready it for settlers, inhabitants were cleared off. This was done through 'bush scouring', which was understood by townsfolk as the rooting out of rebels in their forest strongholds. In reality ... villages were burnt, crops trampled, people killed.' Nevertheless this is not the only story she tells: in the lithograph *Captain Cook makes his Approach from the West*, Cook is disadvantaged, coming in from the right while 'On the left side of the picture, the protagonist's side, a Māori chief calmly stands.' In bringing the past of Classical Greece into the then present of colonisation and then bringing colonisation into our present, Marian Maguire enacts the connection of past and present which has been such a prominent theme in this issue of *Humanities Australia*. One of the eternal themes of the humanities, it is also a fundamental concern of our world today.

This will be the last issue of *Humanities Australia* in its current form as the Academy moves to a different mode of publication. It has always been intended as an outward-facing journal and this will continue with the Academy's publications into the future. It has been a great privilege to guide the Academy's flagship publication through the last five years. I want to pay tribute to the previous editor, Elizabeth Webby, for her work in establishing a journal of such high quality and interest. I would also like to thank all the contributors over the years and particularly to give my personal thanks to the contributors during my time as editor. I am very grateful to the Secretariat of the Academy for their support to me as the Academy's Editor in all the functions of that role. In particular I want to thank Gillian Cosgrove, who has typeset and designed the journal, and, above all, Liz Bradtke: it has been an immense pleasure to work with Liz and she has made a large contribution to the success of *Humanities Australia*. ¶



GRAHAM TULLOCH FAHA
Editor, Australian Academy
of the Humanities, 2016–



#ArtsforSurvival

LIBBY ROBIN

TURNING TO THE HUMANITIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

IN 2018, I BECAME A CREATIVE WORKER rather than an academic. I left my university position to take my scholarly skills to a wider audience. My interests broadly focus on the 'environmental humanities', an emerging response across many disciplines and the cultural sector to rapidly changing environments—natural and social, local and global. The environmental humanities use creativity, including writing, art, music and exhibitions, to work with audiences and communities personally, to try to slow planetary damage and to heal personal stress. Documenting environmental decline is not enough to create change: dismal stories just paralyse people, including the narrators of such stories, as climate scientists regularly testify.¹ In distancing myself from institutional pressures, I sought out different freedoms that might enable me to contribute more directly to the transition to a carbon-neutral future for the planet, to find more fairness for its people and more sustainable and happier ways of

living with the crises and change already happening. The *Climarte* movement is one impressive model. *Climarte* sponsors festivals that support renewable energy with public art, brings together business, philanthropy and artists to fulfil its heartening motto: *Art plus Climate equals Change*.² The initiative began in Melbourne in 2015, and now reaches well beyond big cities, taking in regional areas like the Latrobe Valley where emissions reduction affects local industries. Working with innovative social movements like *Climarte* enables an individual to contribute to the broader community, especially to support people adversely affected by necessary economic transitions.

The creative sector, especially the generations coming after me, is crucial to 'making a difference'. The 'business-as-usual' system is broken. It has broken on my watch. I am one of the post-war generation that has lived through most of the era of the Great Acceleration. In just seven decades, global

▲ Detail, fig. 1.

▼ **Fig 1.** Alexander Boynes, Mandy Martin, Tristen Parr, *Luminous Relic* (still), as installed in Geelong Art Gallery for *Climarte* 2017, from the Catalogue of the Exhibition. [260 x 1210cm, pigment, sand, crusher dust, acrylic, oil on linen; 5 panels, connecting landscapes of industrial Corio (north Geelong, Victoria) and Antarctica. Three-channel HD video projection and stereo sound score, 6'00" duration, looped.]

IMAGE: ALEXANDER BOYNES



population has more than tripled, and humans are now placing unprecedented pressure on all Earth's natural systems. Mine is the first generation whose children and grandchildren will be worse off than their parents. Humans are no longer just one animal among many, but rather we, our domesticated animals, our technological changes and our megacities are together a *geological* force, under consideration as a new epoch, the Anthropocene.³ Fossil-fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions, extinctions, waste of all sorts and mental health issues have all skyrocketed at once. The digital revolution has re-envisioned the world as a 'global village', yet it is an increasingly unfair world where the rich in the richest countries are richer than ever, and many poorer nations are suffering the effects of rising sea levels, collapsed fisheries, famines and many other consequences of the climate emergency.⁴ The rapidity, the extent and the variety of negative changes to environments, including massive irreversible extinctions of species, have stunned us. Many feel guilt, grief and anxiety. Yet Australia's national governments have responded with paralysis and denial.

Universities, once places of knowledge for public interest, have turned towards ever-narrowing, often arcane specialties that support business models built on international competition and league tables. Most universities now encourage 'international' projects at the expense of local ones. Universities only count research outcomes that are placed in scholarly journals behind paywalls, at the expense of free-to-air media or books. Their funding models now depend on what they can count internally, rather than on how they contribute to Australian society. University expertise has narrowed sharply at exactly the time when the Anthropocene predicament demands cross-cutting conversations that rise above specialty. We need to find ways to work collectively towards the common good. That means engaging audiences who don't just look like ourselves. We need to reach beyond scholarly and generational silos. The long apprenticeship to enter the research culture in a university, and the precarious nature of early career

appointments make universities less inclusive than they used to be. Youth-led initiatives have been crippled by the pandemic, but even before that, the 'supermarket university', where students don't need to attend lectures at all, has changed the nature of the institution, and severely limited opportunities for *ad hoc* intellectual interventions in response to urgent issues.⁵

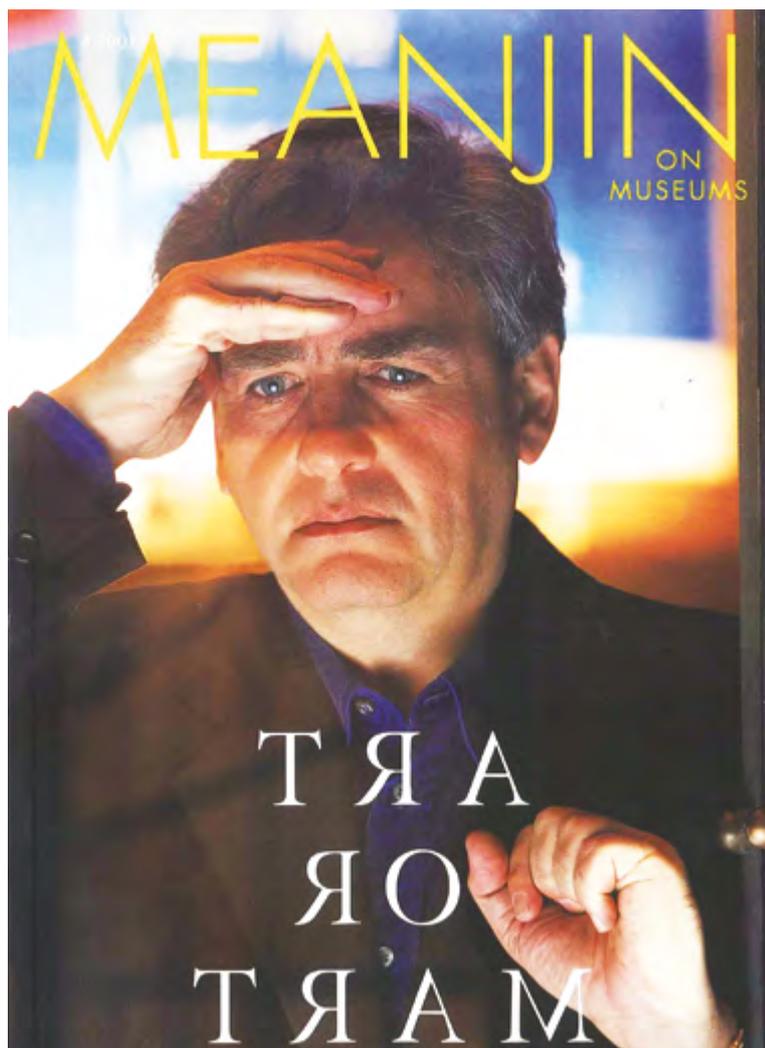
Museums are an alternative space for creative initiatives. As 'slow media', they offer a place for contemplation and reflection, and a chance for diverse audiences and different generations to work together and take stock of rapid change and plan for a rapidly changing future.⁶ They are both international and local places, where issues of global change are on display, creating opportunities for considering the new moral world.⁷ Museums are flexible spaces of intellectual leadership, powerful in different ways from universities. I have worked at the cross-roads between museums and universities, and sometimes in the form of projects where they work together. However, the GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) is also under funding pressure, and its broader long-term philosophies suffer under pressure to manage an ever narrower present. A "Blockbuster Exhibition", for example, may be seen as a financial lifeline. Yet paradoxically it can absorb all the budget for several years in order to attract visitors to fund, well ... the next Blockbuster. Meanwhile, the work of maintaining collections of natural history (the last animals of some species, for example), the historical stories of those who lived through disasters or travelled around the world to escape oppression, the personal diaries and papers and the conservation of historical art works, has been sidelined. Maintenance can be the hardest thing to do, as artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles argues through her art practice. Art Culture always favours 'pure individual creation; the new; change; progress, advance, excitement, flight or fleeing' over *maintenance* of the household (or institution). Ukeles, a first-wave feminist, set out to make art that challenged masculinist Art Culture. Since maintenance 'takes all the ... time,' her art practice celebrated 'homemaking,

motherhood and domestic work'.⁸ Maintenance is not about individual stars: rather it is a place where women, diverse communities and volunteers collectively build a bigger, richer life for museums. Collecting for the future is core museum business.⁹ Neglecting the future has a cost.

'All over the world', Ian Britain wrote in 2001, 'those interested in museums, whether as organisers, spectators or critics, have witnessed a process whereby cultural institutions ... have become increasingly susceptible to marketing imperatives, strategies and criteria of worth'.¹⁰ Blurring the boundaries between culture and commerce does not necessarily limit the aesthetic and scholarly values of the institutions, but it does shift their emphasis and spending. Two decades on from the 'museums' issue of *Meanjin*, we still need to debate the types of creativity supported by museums and universities, not just the 'bottom line'. Freedom of scholarship can work in partnership with business interests. Indeed, developing inclusive hybrid models for creative lives is exactly what the changing planet needs more of. 'Business-as-usual' has failed to come to terms with the natural or cultural worlds, and has accelerated damage to the planet and societies. The creative industries can still grow despite shrinking natural resources: the humanities in universities can expand by working with theatre, museums, music, art, dance and more. Creativity has no limits. Creativity has a future. It remains a place for hope, for meaning and—I argue—for economic, cultural and human growth.¹¹

THE MANY AUSTRALIAN ECONOMIES

Canadian historian Michelle Murphy has documented how 'The Economy' can shape injustice in the western world. Life 'shimmers with economic forces brought into relief by practices of quantification that do more than just aggregate, measure and model with number', she argues.¹² GDP becomes an 'affective stimulus', invested with collective aspirations and worries, a 'phantasy' dictated by the biggest economic players. The people whose life is a sum of small personal things, who spend time in conversations with



friends, gardening and walking, are invisible in such an Economy. If you *live* life, rather than consume it, you are excluded from the number crunching. Nature, clean air and water are essential to biological existence, yet because they 'cost' nothing, they are outside the conversation. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated what Murphy dubs the 'economisation of life', throwing up false dichotomies between the health of business and the health of citizens. A healthy economy needs a healthy society, and both economy and society are underpinned by a healthy environment.¹³ Life is very much more than The Economy.

When politicians talk, The Economy often becomes a proxy for the nation—yet it is not particularly Australian, nor inclusive of citizens. The things that count—for example, the Australian Supermarket Trolley—are surprisingly limited. Australia is surely much

▲ Fig 2. *Meanjin on Museums* 4/2001, in which editor Ian Britain opened up the question of how museums 'have become increasingly susceptible to marketing imperatives', and how this changes their culture.

IMAGE: MEANJIN

more than the 20 items designated to represent the domestic economy. Of the list only the two litres of milk would be in my fridge. Many items are bulk-packaged, demanding a kitchen with massive storage, and a car to transport them. Bigger isn't necessarily cheaper. It just suits the logistics. Buying big adds waste at the supermarkets and at home.¹⁴ Supermarket shelves are loaded with choices between very similar products in different coloured packages. The duopoly supermarket is not the only Australia. Yet these supermarkets and their co-owned businesses (Bunnings, for example), were kept open preferentially when all else was closed during the pandemic, although they were dangerously crowded and much more of a health-risk than a small fruit shop or organic grocery store.

The biggest companies, most of which are not Australian-owned, reaped the benefits of government policy and support structures.¹⁵ The FAANGs (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google (now Alphabet), none of which have headquarters in Australia or contribute much to our taxation systems, made huge profits and saw their share prices rise sharply, as digital work and entertainment became essential to life in lockdown. Rescue packages were blind or ideologically deaf to philosophically diverse creative initiatives that build and reassure communities. Mental health concerns exploded. Gender and intergenerational inequality also grew sharply in the pandemic.¹⁶

Meanwhile, many small businesses and most creative industries struggled and missed out on support. Universities also missed out. All but a handful of private universities were defined as ineligible for the JobKeeper scheme, which served to reassure global financial markets of the health of the economy, while many citizens suffered. When universities are framed in economic, rather than creative terms, people's pain becomes invisible. Casual employees lost their jobs, and often their back-up jobs in hospitality at the same time. International students were regularly described as a major 'source of revenue', yet their own place in Australia was precarious as they were largely ineligible for JobSeeker. The diplomatic and cultural values of this generation of

international students studying in Australia have been railroaded by policies to save The Economy.

Humanities and arts educators faced peculiar challenges in 2020. The Federal Government adopted a new university fee structure for students, designed to encourage enrolment in what they defined as courses relevant to The Economy.¹⁷ Political journalist George Megalogenis was among many who argued that 'sidelining the arts hurts the economy'. The arts, universities and community sectors are only 'useless' to The Economy if it is defined in terms that suit vested interests and global corporates. The next generation of students, despite everything, still seek out humanities courses to train their critical thinking and empathy, recognising the rising importance of these skills in an era of marketing, spin and anti-social behaviour. 'Not a dollar of promised funding had reached the arts by October ... Without the arts, all we had to make sense of a year in lockdown was politics', Megalogenis concluded.¹⁸ Increased student fees in fact provided perverse incentives for cash-strapped universities to *increase* places in humanities and offer *fewer* cost-intensive 'useful' courses like nursing. However 'expensive' courses in the arts (visual arts, theatre and music) were axed. Students were left with more expensive fees for humanities courses that offered less than before and were increasingly delivered online without the benefits of a peer group of learners.¹⁹

CREATIVITY FOR LOCKDOWN

Communities, fragmented by successive crises, including—in 2020 alone—bushfires, floods, storms and the pandemic, turned constantly to the creative arts to rebuild and renew.²⁰ The creative sector itself struggled, but somehow kept faith, maintaining continuity often through unpaid work for when the visitors would eventually return to museums, audiences to theatre and crowds to the streets.²¹ Footballers, tennis players, musicians and theatre actors alike commented on how weird it was to perform without a crowd. Crowds stimulate performance, give it an edge.

Tim Byrne in a scathing report on how theatre companies coped during and after lockdown, commented on the ‘dispiritedness’ that set in as ‘sector after sector’ was nominated for federal government support, without a single mention of the arts, ‘as if an entire economic ecosystem, and the central pillar of our cultural identity, simply didn’t exist’. Yet even when locked down at home, Byrne noted, ‘households around the nation immediately turned to ... streaming music, Netflix—without realising that everything that lifted their spirits, and from a mental health perspective literally saved lives, came from artists.’²²

The creative arts were the first response to the sudden shock of an empty diary, the cancellation of school and everything else. The challenge was to transcend paralysis. The television or a crime novel provided the only company for some locked down alone. Others, with a house too full of people, struggled to run both work and a school curriculum from the kitchen table, often with the same computer. Excessive family time demanded creative outlets. Some parents found themselves singing in an *ad hoc* rock band with their twenty-something offspring. Small creative routines pushed back at the four walls that squeezed life small, offering moments to laugh, to talk about anxiety, to bear witness to uncertainty.

Watching is not the same as performing, as playing, as *practising*. Participation is what has been limited in 2020 as we are physically isolated, yet the improvised playrooms of hotel quarantine—with tennis players hitting balls at upended mattresses, for example—show that creativity can take many forms. Music and the arts are food for the soul. There is a special value in making one’s own music (singing in the shower, for example) or painting (whether it be a picture or an old chair) or gardening. It doesn’t have to be perfect: it is the performance that counts. The urge to play is in all of us. Margaret Landvogt describes herself as ‘an aging practising artist’. She links art to play, and play to emotional strength. Her lifetime of training, of practising, of playing with art has built a creative ‘core strength’ that has filled the vacuum of isolation brought on by the pandemic. Art for her is ‘not about fame and

fortune’ but rather ‘a lifetime of joy’.²³ Cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner suggests that adults need to re-learn the playful creativity that children know instinctively. Play may be the only pathway to a ‘new dignity’.²⁴

Professional creative workers have re-learned to play as well. When the show *Six Characters in Search of an Author* was cancelled in London’s West End, leading actors, Michael Sheen and David Tennant, found themselves suddenly without work. They improvised and self-filmed a sitcom, *Staged*, making fun of themselves (and each other) stuck in lockdown in Wales and Scotland respectively. *Staged* is now in its third season on streamed television in Australia.²⁵ Meanwhile Sam Neill (in New Zealand) persuaded Helen Bonham Carter (in London) to co-star in his own Cinema Quarantino Production, *Das Fone Hell*, a 2 minute 20 second video released free on Twitter.²⁶ Laughing with such international creative leaders helped us all, and their playful, irreverent projects found them new fans.

During the first lockdown I curated a virtual scrapbook of creative responses to catastrophe under the hashtag *ArtsforSurvival*. I am glad I did. Later in the year the rest of Australia (and indeed most of the world) was open more-or-less ‘as normal’, but Victorians were in harder lockdown than ever. By the end of 2020, we had been ‘home alone’ for eight months. *#ArtsforSurvival* kept some creative moments alive as the mood darkened. The three-week pause between lockdowns became a distant memory. We were fatigued by zoom calls, doom-scrolling and running both work and life on screens, on the kitchen table. We were lucky, of course. It worked. But the creative spirits were flagging: they needed air.

Galleries, libraries, archives and museums all suffered in the lockdowns. When you work for an institution that is all about audiences, closing the doors abruptly seems like death. Yet staff, working from home, revisited the original purposes of their institutions and turned to collecting their ‘unprecedented’ moment in history. Curators felt the need to ‘bear witness’ to the extraordinary times and urged the community to join them in this task. Thus the pandemic gave back museums to

► Fig 3. Tim Byrne's essay about forgetting the creative economy in the pandemic was the cover story for *Australian Book Review*, April 2021, no. 430.

IMAGE: AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW



their communities in ways that will probably persist beyond 2020. Extraordinary stories have long created exhibitions to help survivors heal.²⁷ The successive crises of the recent past have brought on a new wave of personal story-making, and new reasons to visit museums.

The GLAM sector didn't so much 'pivot', as government and business did, but rather *innovate*. It followed people on their personal journeys through crises and created new ways to host ordinary and extraordinary stories.²⁸ The John Oxley Library instigated a *Covid-19 Collecting Drive* calling on the community to collect ephemera (flyers, posters, signs, mail-outs) that reflected the 'experiences of Queenslanders'.²⁹ In Hobart, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery joined forces with Libraries Tasmania in a Covid-19 Stories project that reflected 'the impact of this historic event on the lives and livelihoods of everyday Tasmanians'. Together they created a 'collective memory for the future'.³⁰ The project included writing and oral histories, photographs and other objects, like children's drawings or unfinished jigsaw puzzles. The Museum of Perth also appealed for digital stories under the banner *Coronavirus in West Australia*. 'We need your help to chronicle these times', they wrote, calling for street scenes, social media posts, audio or video recordings or any other digital medium.³¹

The different responses to the pandemic in different states elicited a strong sense of 'local stories' in each place. The State Library of Victoria started a *Community Collection of Covid Ephemera* early in the first lockdown (6 April 2020), reminding people not to take risks but aiming for 'a collection of government, community and business documents, especially very local ones'.³² By the long second lockdown, extra strategies were needed to maintain interest in the library itself. The *Library in your Lounge* outreach program for members, offering 'services, collections and programs from the comfort of your home, a Covid-safe experience of the Library'.³³ It was harder to thread a national story through the distinctive state stories, so national institutions defined audiences differently. The National Museum of Australia in Canberra built on its 2014 gallery, *Defining Moments*, that presented '100 significant moments in history', and created digital material to help parents and teachers support children undertaking school-at-home projects in Australian history.³⁴ Melbourne's Australian Centre for Contemporary Art also ran a *Defining Moments* program, building on its 2019 *Australian Exhibition Histories 1968–1999* lecture series that reviewed 'the moments that have shaped Australian art since 1968'.³⁵ Since lectures programmed for 2020 could no longer be presented live, *Defining Moments* was re-created as a podcast set, an ongoing resource for future students of art history.

State institutions wanted to capture the 'unprecedented' moment as it unfolded in a very *local* community, bringing together stories of *living* in the pandemic. National institutions identified special audiences—school children studying history at home, art-history students. The relationships with audiences were virtual, but still targeted and personal. Contrast this with the discourse about The Economy, where many economies were conflated or excluded, and where the global market defined what counted, rather than any individual's experience. Economic discussions were relentlessly future-focused, but actually were desperate to 'return to normal'. By contrast, museum patrons were encouraged to explore the exceptional, to hold on to this remarkable



moment in history, to carry the moment forward in time. Such collections offer concrete data for future uncertainty as they provide baselines to help people to grapple with inevitable future pandemics, in times that may never be ‘normal’ again.

TAKING HEART

Rebuilding a world of beauty for all humanity is life-affirming for artists and audiences, for curators and museum visitors. Musicians, for example, are taking new roles in redefining war zones far beyond Australia. The bombed streets of Mosul in Iraq are being re-enlivened through music. Local violinist, Ehsan Akram Al Habib, revived the diverse musical traditions of his province of Ninewah, home to many religious, cultural and ethnic minorities. Specific songs, instruments and musical forms are also a pathway to social cohesion as musicians plied their craft in Mosul’s public places: on streets and laneways, in former churches and mosques reduced to rubble by the war. Music breathed new life into the rubble. ‘Music is a world of beauty for all of

humanity, and it is a major part of Mosul and of Iraq,’ said Ehsan.³⁶ The music also re-tuned international audiences who knew Mosul only through television news of the war. Under the spell of local musicians, Mosul has become a new place of peace and possibilities for a *good life*. Impromptu concerts create a different future for Mosul after war, after Covid, when its wonderful complex history might make it a good place to live again.

A capacity to think critically and to behave in ways guided by moral rather than merely economic principles is something that scholars of humanities and the arts do all the time. The arts and creative humanities are *heartening* activities. Yet, as we turn to the task of ‘recovering’ from the pandemic, socially and personally (and even economically), the creative arts are often sidelined. An obsessive focus on economic growth doesn’t help ordinary people survive. Supporting economic options seems to come at the cost of enabling creativity and maintaining our community spirit. We all still need playfulness and free-to-

▲ **Fig 4.** Still from ‘Imagine if Music was a Crime’, video by Rawi Khalid, musician and actor, bringing peace to Mosul by playing his Oud in its broken corners. Khalid’s work is part of UNESCO’s flagship program, Revive the Spirit of Mosul (posted to YouTube 10 September 2020).

IMAGE: MOAMIN AL-OBAIDI

air options to underpin sanity and health, in order to recover.

Since the famous *Blue Marble* view of Earth was photographed on 7 December 1972 from *Apollo 17*, we have become acutely aware that there is *Only One Earth*.³⁷ Yet while the Earth's resources are limited, and unfairly shared by humans, there is still one way to grow that doesn't add to injustice or cost the Earth. Participating in the creative sector is something that provides solace and sanity for all citizens. An economy based on natural resources cannot grow for ever. Yet there is no limit on the possibilities for human creativity, as the philosopher John Stuart Mill argued in 1848. There are always prospects for *improving* the Art of Living, 'and much more likelihood of it being improved, *when minds ceased to be engrossed by the art of getting on*.'³⁸ Creative futures are healthy futures that demand *less* of the planet and more of the human intellect, particularly the various endeavours of the humanities.

I have just experienced my first theatre since 2019, at the Castlemaine Festival in March 2021. It is a wonderful and amazing thing to breathe again, alongside others, after more than a year of holding my breath. Ross Gibson has described and celebrated the collective intake of breath shared by a live audience: 'The actor is your representative, breathing you... and thereby extending you and helping you inhabit experiences other than your own.'³⁹ Lee Lewis, artistic director of the Queensland Theatre, argues that 'art is intrinsically linked to the health of the cities. When the audience breathes, so the city breathes.'⁴⁰ Following a year of bushfire smoke and Covid and #BlackLivesMatter, breathing has a new radical importance. It is always left out of The Economy. It cannot be digitised. Yet we all still depend on it. Every breath creates empathetic connections with broader life worlds. These are the connections that keep us alive. ¶

This essay honours the creative leadership of Mandy Martin (1952–2021). If you would like to join supporters of the Mandy Martin Climarte Fellowship, the information is on the inside front cover of this issue.



EMERITUS PROFESSOR

LIBBY ROBIN FAHA is

an historian of science and environmental ideas.

She is Emeritus Professor at the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National

University, independent writer and Curator-at-Large. Career highlights include Guest Professor at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm in the Division of History of Science and Technology (2011–2014; affiliated professor 2015–2017) and Senior Fellow in the National Museum of Australia's Research Centre (2007–2015). Libby has published widely in the history of science, international and comparative environmental history, museum studies and the ecological humanities. She has won national and international prizes in History (*How a Continent Created a Nation*), in Zoology (*Boom and Bust*), and in literature (*Flight of the Emu, The Future of Nature*).

1. Joëlle Gergis, 'The Great Unravelling', *The Guardian*, 15 October 2020. <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/oct/15/the-great-unravelling-i-never-thought-id-live-to-see-the-horror-of-planetary-collapse>> [accessed 13 April 2021]; Lesley Hughes, 'When planetary catastrophe is your day job', *The Monthly*, June 2018. <<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2018/june/1527775200/lesley-hughes/when-planetary-catastrophe-your-day-job>> [accessed 13 April 2021].
2. Libby Robin, 'Hi-Vis Futures: Art for Climate Justice', International Consortium of Environmental History Organisations, *ICEHO Stories* 2020. <<https://www.iceho.org/artforclimate>>
3. Libby Robin, 'Environmental Humanities and Climate Change: Understanding Humans Geologically and Other Life Forms Ethically', *WIRES Climate Change*, 9:1 (2018).
4. Libby Robin, 'A History of Global Ideas about Environmental Justice', in *Natural Resources and Environmental Justice: Australian Perspectives*, ed. by Anna Lukasiewicz, Stephen Dovers, Libby Robin, Jennifer McKay, Steven Schilizzi and Sonia Graham (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2017), pp. 13–25. Note that the term 'Climate Emergency' is now the preferred description <<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/we-are-living-in-a-climate-emergency-and-were-going-to-say-so/>> [accessed 13 April 2021].
5. Judith Brett, 'The Bin Fire of the Humanities', *The Monthly*, March 2021. <<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2021/march/1614517200/judith-brett/bin-fire-humanities>> [accessed 8 March 2021].
6. An example of this is discussed in Libby Robin and Cameron Muir, 'Slamming the Anthropocene: Performing Climate Change in Museums', *reCollections*, 10:1 (2015). <<http://recollections.nma>

- gov.au/issues/volume_10_number_1/papers/slamming_the_anthropocene.
7. *Curating the Future: Museums, Communities and Climate Change*, ed. by Jennifer Newell, Libby Robin and Kirsten Wehner (Routledge Environmental Humanities) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).
 8. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, 'Manifesto for Maintenance Art' (1969). For the complete text of the Manifesto see Jillian Steinhauer, 'How Mierle Laderman Ukeles Turned Maintenance Work into Art', *Hyperallergic*, 10 February 2017 <<https://hyperallergic.com/355255/how-mierle-laderman-ukeles-turned-maintenance-work-into-art/>> [accessed 10 March 2021].
 9. American Museum of Natural History and National Museum of Australia, *Collecting the Future*, Workshop, 2–4 October 2013. See <<http://www.amnh.org/our-research/anthropology/news-events/collecting-the-future>>.
 10. Ian Britain 'Editorial: Museums and More', *Meanjin*, Special Issue *On Museums: Art or Mart*, 60:4 (2001), 6–7 (p. 6).
 11. Technical solutions can help, but a reliance on technology alone to solve problems aggravates dissociation from what it means to live in the natural world within touch of other humans around us, rather than on screens and in virtual worlds, usually created by vested interests for their own purposes.
 12. Michelle Murphy, *The Economization of Life* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 24.
 13. Kate Raworth, *A Safe and Just Space for Humanity: Can we live within the Doughnut?* Oxfam Discussion Paper, 2012, Oxford: Oxfam. <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/dp-a-safe-and-just-space-for-humanity-130212-en_5.pdf> [accessed 13 April 2021]
 14. Jewel Topfield, "Let them eat bin cake": The Food-waste Warriors Dumpster Diving for their Supper', *The Age*, 28 September 2019.
 15. Gareth Hutchens 'Dozens of companies report large boost in profits', ABC Business Report, 18 March 2021 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-18/companies-report-large-boost-profits-after-receiving-jobkeeper/13256210>> [accessed 18 March 2021].
 16. Danielle Wood, Kate Griffiths, and Tom Crowley, *Women's Work: The Impact of the COVID Crisis on Australian Women* (Carlton, Vic.: Grattan Institute, 2021).
 17. Brett, 'The Bin Fire of the Humanities'.
 18. George Megaloginis, 'And now for something completely indifferent', *The Monthly*, December 2020–January 2021, pp. 10–13.
 19. Frank Bongiorno, 'Oh, the humanities', *The Monthly: Today*, 22 June 2020.
 20. Marcus Westbury, *Creating Cities* (Melbourne: Niche Press, 2015).
 21. Zoos were another sector that was left stranded, with in some cases, animals being fed by unpaid volunteers, so they would be still around after the pandemic.
 22. Tim Byrne, 'A plague on all our houses: How Theatre Companies are Coping after Lockdown', *Australian Book Review*, April 2021, pp. 26–28 (p. 26).
 23. Margaret Landvogt, 'Creative Play', unpublished manuscript (2 pp.) enclosed with a personal letter, January 2021.
 24. Jerome Bruner, *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 17.
 25. *Staged* went on to second and third seasons with BBC productions, as the pandemic dragged on.
 26. Sam Neill @twopaddocks on Twitter, 23 May 2020. YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGwBA6srFQo&ab_channel=TwoPaddocks>
 27. George Main, Craig Middleton, Martha Sear and Libby Stewart, 'Documenting Australia's 2019/2020 Bushfires', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 35 (2020), 697–704.
 28. The examples discussed below were just a small subset of a variety of programs: <<https://museum.wa.gov.au/collecting-covid-19>>; <<https://slwa.wa.gov.au/explore-discover/collecting-wa/covid-19-collecting-drive>>; <<https://covid-19archive.org/s/Australia/page/about>>; <<https://museums victoria.com.au/collections-research/collecting-the-curve/>>; <<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/nswathome>>; <<https://www.nma.gov.au/about/bridging-the-distance-pandemic-experiences>>; <<https://www.nla.gov.au/stories/blog/behind-the-scenes/2020/05/12/covid-19-preserving-the-stories-of-australia>>; <<https://digital.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/pages/covid-19>>; <<https://mispgh.unimelb.edu.au/healthworkervoices>>; <<https://pandemicplayproject.com/>>. (Thanks to Sophie Couchman for the helpful Twitter archive of links, starting 28 May 2020, and to responses posted after that date).
 29. <<https://www.siq.qld.gov.au/blog/covid-19-collecting-drive>>
 30. <https://www.tmag.tas.gov.au/whats_on/newsselect/2020articles/covid-19_stories_project>
 31. <<https://www.museumofperth.com.au/covid19>> The stories could be anonymous, with only the suburb identified. They were posted on Facebook <<https://www.facebook.com/museumofperth>>
 32. <<https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/stories/covid-19-community-collecting>>
 33. During the second 'hard' lockdown, people in the city of Melbourne were limited to within 5 kms of their homes and could only leave for 'four reasons', a different approach was needed: <<https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/library-your-lounge>> (This site is no longer accessible.)
 34. The initial list of 100 events was developed by the NMA and its co-patrons, the late Michael Ball (former National Capital Authority) and Michael Kirby (former Justice of the High Court of Australia), with guidance from a range of senior scholars of Australian history, listed on the website as Judith Brett, Rae Frances, Bill Gammage, John Hirst, Jackie Huggins, Marilyn Lake and John Maynard <<https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/about>>. The 100 events chosen in 2014 are online: <<https://www>>

- nma.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/540121/NMA-100-defining-moments-print-version.pdf [accessed 31 October 2020]. The school children's program was developed in 2020 <<https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/>>.
35. <<https://acca.melbourne/series/defining-moments/>> [accessed 21 March 2021].
 36. UNESCO's project 'Listening to Iraq', is a partnership with the 'Action for Hope', NGO, created in 2013 to empower vulnerable populations through celebrating cultural diversity and strengthening social cohesion. <<https://en.unesco.org/news/music-mosul-more-just-tune>> [accessed 9 March 2021]. 'Imagine if Music was a Crime' YouTube: <<https://youtu.be/LAxPZrQfExE>> [accessed 3 June 2021].
 37. This was the title of the book of the United Nations conference on Environment and Development, held in Stockholm the same year: Barbara Ward and René Dubos, *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet* (New York: Norton, 1972).
 38. John Stuart Mill, 'Influence of the Progress of Society on Production and Distribution' (1848), in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume III*, ed. by John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 705–57 (p. 756, my emphasis).
 39. Ross Gibson, 'Breathing. Looking. Thinking. Acting', *Humanities Australia* (2013), 17–24 (p. 19).
 40. Lee Lewis as cited in Byrne, p.28.

Were the Ancient Athenians Ever Lonely?

ALASTAIR J.L. BLANSHARD

RECENT EVENTS HAVE GIVEN a particular urgency to our discussions around the topic of social isolation. Fear of contagion has pathologised our meetings and our movements. At the same time, we know that safe social distancing comes with a heavy emotional and psychic cost. Whether it is in hotel quarantine or a community under lock-down, we have become all too aware that loneliness and isolation are serious issues.

The pandemic has brought questions about loneliness to the fore, but our anxiety about our lack of social connections has been building for a while. On 17 January 2018, the British Government took the unprecedented step of announcing the appointment of a special minister for loneliness. This move has been followed in Japan which in 2021 also appointed a minister for loneliness. In both cases, the news caused headlines all over the world and has been universally regarded as a positive development. There have been calls for Australia to follow suit.¹ Part of the reason for this very welcoming response has been the growing appreciation of the tremendous problems social isolation causes in terms of ill health, poverty, and crime. Socially-isolated or lonely individuals tend to be sicker, live shorter lives, are more prone to suicide, alcoholism, heart disease, dementia, cognitive decline, and violent crime.²

Popular culture has similarly become obsessed with loneliness and social isolation.

The last few decades have seen a marked increase in the often salacious and grim reporting about people who die alone and whose bodies are not discovered in their houses for months or even years. The case of Joyce Carol Vincent whose body was only discovered in her flat three years after her death has become emblematic of a much wider societal problem and has been commemorated in film and song.³

Émile Durkheim was among the first to regard loneliness as one of the hallmarks of the modern condition. His influential study of suicide in 1897 stressed the relationship between the isolation of modern life and suicide. Rates and occurrences of suicide between closely-knit Catholic communities and more individualist Protestant ones were compared. Similarly compared were occurrences of suicide between large and small families and married and unmarried individuals. The key for Durkheim in understanding many of these cases of suicide was the lack of organic social cohesion present in the lives of the suicide victims.

While Durkheim did also see suicide emerging from too much social intervention in the lives of individuals, an interpretation of his work which sees it identifying the modern world as one of sick, isolated individuals has proven influential. Indeed, while few would regard his work these days as a useful text for the study and prevention of suicide, as a



▲ Detail, fig. 1, p. 17.

form of cultural critique, it still has potency. In particular, his idea of *anomie*—a sense of rootlessness and an unwillingness to engage with the formal structures of society—has been taken up in a variety of fields as the quintessential modern condition.

Modernity and loneliness seem to emerge hand-in-hand. It is worthwhile asking therefore how the two are related. Or to put it another way, does loneliness have a history? Does it precede the modern world? If so, in what form? How closely aligned is loneliness with the social forces associated with industrialisation? What does the pre-industrial life of loneliness look like? As Hellenists, we may ask ‘Were the ancient Athenians ever lonely?’ And if not, as the evidence suggests, why?

THE PROBLEM OF FINDING LONELINESS IN ATHENS

Writing a history of emotions is a difficult business. It is hard enough trying to work out if someone across the other side of the room is feeling the same things as you do, let alone across the ages. Language helps, but only partially. Translating a complex term like ‘loneliness’ from one language to another requires you to correlate a subtle and complex semantic range across languages with a precision and certainty that is often impossible to achieve.

Despite the difficulties, starting with language is often productive and insightful. It is worth observing that ancient Greek seems largely ignorant of loneliness. While ancient Greek has a rich and complicated vocabulary to denote various types of affection, in comparison, the vocabulary for loneliness is relatively impoverished. Greek seems to regard the issue of cataloguing an overwhelming outpouring of warmth a more pressing matter than defining a life with its absence. So, for example, Greek famously has three different words to demarcate the various species of passion that we generically call ‘love,’ along with a very sophisticated range of kinship terms which allows it to delineate everyone up to the great-grandchildren of maternal half-sisters.⁴ Yet, while it is certainly possible to construct a vocabulary for loneliness, this

is only possible by drafting in words that are more normally used to indicate ideas of singularity, physical isolation, sterility, or individuality rather than any negative emotional state. It is perhaps telling that the modern Greek term for loneliness is not effectively attested before the twelfth century CE, where it emerges amongst Christian writers.

Along with language, it is useful to consider social structures. Scholars who work on loneliness often like to distinguish between social isolation and loneliness, and they do so for good reasons. Not everyone who is socially isolated is lonely, not everyone who is lonely is socially isolated. That said, social isolation is an effective predictor for a high degree of loneliness. This is especially the case when social isolation occurs in the absence of any social or ideological structures, such as religious faith or societal endorsement, that mitigate or compensate for the effects of isolation. Hermits or religious ascetics don’t seem to have suffered the same effects of loneliness as others despite their isolation. Here systems of belief act to help build resilience despite the lack of social interaction.

Examining the structure of Athenian society indicates why loneliness might be hard to find. In ancient Athens, you were almost never alone.⁵ We see this most clearly in the agrarian economy where there was a high degree of interdependence of labour—slave, hired, and free. Such cooperation was essential for the successful harvesting of crops and responding to the challenges of an always harsh environment. The chatty, egalitarian nature of life on the land became an Athenian cliché. In the fourth century BCE, the writer Theophrastus penned a series of character sketches about the various social stereotypes that one could encounter in Athens. Amongst these characters was the ‘country dweller’. Theophrastus offers three attributes that help you spot a country person. The first is his bad breath, the second is that he wears shoes that are too large for his feet, and the third is this man’s familiarity with his slaves and farm-workers: ‘[The country dweller is the type who] ... takes the opinion of his slaves on



important matters and explains in great detail all the current political issues to the hired-labourers working on his land.' While there is clearly exaggeration at play here, not least in the way the text suggests such easy relations between master and slave, the impression that life in the Attic countryside revolved around tightly bound communities chatting away and working for the common weal seems to hold true.

Certainly, these values of collaborative cooperation are manifested in Athenian depictions of agricultural labour in vase-painting. The rich iconographic record preserved on the sides of Athenian vases gives us an invaluable insight into the values of the community for which they were produced. They are statements of ideas and ideals. They instruct us in how to think about the world. A black-figured amphora attributed to the Antimenes painter and dated to 520 BC illustrates this well. On one side, we see olive harvest (fig. 1). The scene stresses the way that the harvest is the product of the collective

effort of people across the ages. Two older men beat the olive tree with sticks to dislodge the fruit. A young boy has climbed up into the branches with the aim of knocking fruit from the higher branches. On the ground, a youth collects the fruit in a basket. Only by working together can the harvest be achieved.

In order to underline this focus on cooperation, the image of olive harvesting is juxtaposed with a very different scene on the other side of the vase (fig. 2). In a sudden shift of register, we move from the prosaic to the heroic. Here we are confronted with an encounter between two of Greek myth's great tragic loners, Heracles and the centaur Pholos. In moving from agricultural labourers to Heracles, the vase cleverly plays with the Greek concept of *ponos* which can mean 'work,' but also 'heroic labour or struggle' of the type of which Heracles was famous. Two types of *ponos* are being compared and the contrast between the two images could not be more stark. Knowing viewers of the encounter between Pholos and Heracles can only look away in

▲ **Fig 1.** (left) The Olive Harvest. Black-figure amphora, attributed to the Antimenes Painter, 520 BC. The British Museum. 1837,0609.42.

IMAGE: © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

▲ **Fig 2.** (right) Pholos receiving Heracles. Other side of fig. 1.

IMAGE: © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

► **Fig 3.** Women collecting water at a fountain-house. Black-figure hydria, attributed to the Antimenes Painter, 530–510 BC. The British Museum. 1843,1103.66.

IMAGE: © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

horror. We see here the calm before the storm. It looks to be a scene of two characters greeting each other in friendship, but this is a meeting that will end in tragedy. Heracles visits Pholos as he travels Greece completing one of his 'labours'. When Pholos and Heracles settle down to drink, the smell of their wine will attract wild centaurs. Fights will break out and in the course of the struggle, Heracles will end up fatally wounding his friend Pholos.

The disastrous conviviality of Heracles and Pholos illustrates much about the nature of Heracles' heroic character. Unlike the happy field workers on the other side of the vase, Heracles is a figure who can only work alone. One of his epithets was *monoikos* 'the one who lives alone' and modern day Monaco supposedly gets its name from a nearby temple to Heracles Monoikos. Heracles' assistants rarely last. As in the case with Pholos, whenever he joins company, the evening will almost always end in bloodshed. In his radical autonomy, Heracles marks out the difference between heroes and mortals. Heroes don't need anyone, the rest of us need to rely on each other.

The lives of urbanised Athenians were equally as enmeshed as those on the land. Multi-generational living conditions were common. Studies of Athenian domestic architecture show that while houses certainly were designed to control access and lines of sight from outside, they were also places where neighbours were always aware of the lives happening next door. Domestic architecture in Athens often exhibits multiple contiguous shared walls, so that the sounds and smells of one house transmit easily to adjoining houses. Ancient comedy, for example, is full of incidents of neighbours being able to smell the cooking of the people next door or neighbours who turn up to assist having heard a scuffle or a commotion on the other side of a wall. While there is no doubt some comic exaggeration and plot convenience in these dramatic moments, the lives of family members and events inside houses must have been very familiar to neighbours or even passers-by who stopped to pay attention.



Greek literature routinely paints a picture where every inhabitant of a neighbourhood seems to have had no trouble in keeping track of every other member's movements and actions. Writers regularly complain about the impossibility of keeping anything secret in Athens. Athens was a city full of gossips. Neighbours always seem to be able to inform inquirers about the location of any nearby resident. If you ever needed to find someone in Athens, all you needed to do was ask a neighbour.

Cementing these relationships in the city was the constant reliance on shared resources. Just as in the country, it was impossible to be entirely self-sufficient in the city. The important role that community resources play in bringing citizens together is evocatively illustrated in scenes of women gathering together in the public fountain houses to collect water for their households. This was a popular scene, especially in Athenian black-figure vases, and we possess dozens of examples. The striking feature about these vases is the way in which their iconography stresses the highly social nature of the activity. We almost never see women collecting water alone. Instead, the scenes are filled with women, all engaged in friendly, playful interactions. In one notable example (fig. 3), the

artist fills the blank space between the figures with letters. The letters don't spell out anything sensible. Instead, they skilfully invoke the hub-bub of conversation that filled the air as the women exchanged news and information.

PEOPLE AREN'T LONELY IN GREECE, THEY ARE MISANTHROPIC

This is not to say that we don't find references to people living alone in Athens. However, they are always marked as rare and exceptional. The most famous historical example seems to have been Timon, the figure who lies behind the Shakespeare's play *Timon of Athens*. Shakespeare's plot is completely fictional, a tragicomic tale involving complicated plot twists relating to the topics of the abuse of trust and the fickleness of friends. Our ancient sources about Timon are just as unreliable. Our dates for his life and death vary from the late fifth to the early fourth century BCE. Whatever the truth of his life, Timon became the subject of folklore soon after his death, and the historical reality of the man is almost impossible to reconstruct. That said, the way in which Timon is discussed is noteworthy. In Shakespeare's play, Timon addresses Alcibiades and declares "I am Misanthropos, and hate mankind/For thy part, I do wish thou wert a dog/That I might love thee something" (Act IV, Scene III, Lines 59–61). Shakespeare's plot may be false, but his echo of Athenian discourse rings true. Timon was famous for his hatred, not his loneliness. The emotional state that is regularly ascribed to individuals like Timon is not loneliness, but misanthropy. They do not miss people, they hate them and rejoice in their solitude.

Misanthropy, then, was the condition that concerned Athenians, not loneliness. We possess references to a number of comic plays which seem to feature a central misanthropic character. The surviving play, the *Dyskolos* (The Angry Man) by Menander, might give us a clue about what the plots were like for these plays. The central character in the *Dyskolos* is an anger-fuelled misanthrope by the name of Knemon. Knemon hates mankind. Although, significantly, even misanthropes in Athens

cannot live alone. He shares his house with a slave and a daughter; a nuclear family with servants is what constitutes extreme isolation for Athenians. The trajectory of the plot involves the god Pan ensuring that Knemon's plans to cut himself off from society are foiled. Here the gods are seen to take a dim view on such misanthropic tendencies. Through a series of plot devices, the daughter is eventually betrothed and Knemon is forced to modify his ways and re-enter society. The play ends with multiple weddings and Knemon once again begrudgingly part of a large extended network of families and friends. On the dramatic stage, the misanthrope is a problem to be solved.

Plato reflects these contemporary concerns about misanthropy in speculating about the cause of this anti-social attitude. His reasoning is curious, not least for the way he approaches the topic so differently from how we might approach it. For Plato, the misanthrope is not a person who hates socialising. In fact, it is entirely the reverse—the misanthrope loves others too much, not too little. He is a figure who invests too much in others. Misanthropy occurs when this man discovers that the person that he loves is unworthy of him. However, it will not occur as the result of a single moment of disappointment. Plato is clear that it is only after regular and repeated moments of disappointment that a man will start to become a misanthrope. It requires a complete destruction of faith in humanity for misanthropy to be engendered.

Apart from the comic misanthropes, people were rarely alone by themselves in Attica. People always seem to have moved through the city and the countryside in packs, for protection if nothing else. There were few solitary pastimes. Even reading was rarely conducted alone. Ancient texts were designed to be read aloud to others. Solitary drinking was not a Greek practice. We rarely see figures in literature drinking alone. The archaeological evidence related to drinking (cups, mixing bowls, ladles), all suggest that wine was designed to be shared and served in large groups. The symposium, literally a 'drinking together', was a mainstay of Athenian male social life.



▲ **Fig 4.** (top)
Pan advancing on shepherd. Red-figure bell krater, c. 470 BC.

▲ **Fig 5.** (bottom)
The Death of Actaeon. Other side of fig. 4.

BOTH IMAGES:
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON. 10.185. JULIA BRADFORD HUNTINGTON JAMES FUND AND MUSEUM PURCHASE WITH FUNDS DONATED BY CONTRIBUTION.

BUCOLIC ISOLATION

Was there no place for solitude in Athens? One group of individuals that is worth considering in this regard are shepherds. They represent a rare case of a profession whose practitioners spent a lot of time alone. As we have seen, farmers needed to work collectively and it was the same with most of the trades in the city where even small, independent workshops regularly employed members of the extended family as well as a number of slaves. In contrast, shepherds in order to maximise pasturage opportunities tended to operate

during the day in small groups of one or two, either returning to farms in the evening or coming together into larger groups if they were grazing flocks far away from habitations.

It was a solitary and vulnerable profession. Again we can look to the iconography of Greek vase-painting to give us a sense of this. Perhaps the most striking evocation of the vulnerable nature of the shepherd is found in the name-vase of the Pan Painter. This vase is a mixing bowl found in the Museum of Fine Art in Boston. The central scene (fig. 4) is the one that gives the, otherwise anonymous, Pan Painter his name. It shows a young shepherd fleeing from the sexual advances of the god Pan who advances on him sporting a large erection. The sexually explicit nature of the violence that Pan intends to inflict on the shepherd is underlined by the nearby statue which the artist has endowed with another unfeasibly large menacing erection. Here Pan, the god of the wilderness, embodies all the dangers that the shepherd faces. The other side of the vase reinforces this message (fig. 5). It doesn't show the rape of a shepherd. This time it is the death of a solitary hunter. The scene replays the death of Actaeon, the unfortunate hunter, who, while out in the forest alone, disturbed the goddess Artemis while bathing. For this crime, he was turned into a stag and torn apart by his hunting dogs. Both images speak to the dangers of being alone in the countryside and the dangers that hunters and shepherds faced. It is no wonder that the feeling associated with the presence of Pan is panic.

In facing such dangers alone, these figures are unique and this exceptional work pattern helps to explain why characters such as shepherds feature so regularly in ancient myth. If your plot requires a character who is plausibly all by himself, then a shepherd is your best choice. Solitary shepherds in myth rescue abandoned babies, provide aid to characters who find themselves lost, and generally provide a human presence where we wouldn't expect one.

Shepherds bear witness to events that other people don't get to see. As a group, they more regularly see the gods than other professions.

In Greek myth, when gods appear amongst crowds they regularly appear in disguise. Only shepherds get to see the gods as they really are. Indeed, over time, we can see the development of an aesthetics of epiphany in which the presence of a shepherd and a wild, lush, sheltered landscape become the preconditions for immortal revelation. The strength of this association between shepherds and the appearance of the gods is best demonstrated by stories in which the gods only appear to characters when they become shepherds. So, for example, it is only when the young prince Endymion is serving as a shepherd that the moon goddess appears and falls in love with him. While he was in the palace, she never makes an appearance. Similarly by declaring himself a shepherd, the poet Hesiod strengthens his claims to be a conduit for the divine Muses.

Arguably, the most famous example of this no-divinities-until-you're-first-a-shepherd motif relates to the story of the Judgement of Paris. This famous incident proves to be the catalyst for the events that lead to the tragedy of the Trojan War. According to myth, the young Trojan Prince is out alone as a shepherd when Hermes appears accompanied by Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite who ask him to arbitrate a dispute and award a golden apple to the fairest goddess. Paris spurns the entreaties of Hera and Athena, thereby ending their undying enmity, and chooses to award the apple to Aphrodite. She rewards him by assisting him in his abduction of Helen and the Trojan War erupts as a consequence. The scene is captured on an Athenian red-figured water-jar (fig. 6) which shows the goddesses presenting Paris with the apple. The sheep at his feet faces away from the action refusing to witness Paris making his fatal choice.

How did a Trojan prince become a shepherd? Our sources are unclear about this. The most elaborate telling of this backstory occurs in Euripides' lost play, the *Alexander*.⁶ Only fragments of this play survive, but we do possess an ancient plot summary. It presents a high-convoluted story which has Paris abandoned as an infant and raised as a shepherd, called Alexander, only then



to be reunited with his royal family when he, inappropriately given his low status as a shepherd, enters an athletic competition ironically staged in memory of the exposed young prince. His prowess in the games reveals his royal nature, and his identity is confirmed by the prophetess Cassandra. In the baroque elaborateness of the plot, we see the way in which the story of the Judgement of Paris finds itself pulled in two different narrative directions. The cultural logic of epiphany requires Paris to be a shepherd, but the storyline of status-conscious epic demands that he be a royal hero. The *Alexander* is Euripides' attempt to resolve these tensions.

The stories of shepherds and their supernatural experiences remind us that there can be value in being alone. Are there any other conclusions that we can draw from a study of ancient loneliness for modern society? Looking at the way that Athens seems to have avoided loneliness certainly has implications for the way that we structure work and plan our cities. The strong focus on communal, interdependent labour in Athens should make us concerned about our increasingly atomised, online work existence. Similarly, the important roles allocated to large extended families in Athens remind us of the significant role that kinship networks can play in providing social support. We might also look to ancient cities for ideas about modern town planning. As the

▲ Fig 6. The Judgement of Paris. Red-figured hydria, c. 470 BC. The British Museum. 1873,0820.353.

IMAGE: © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

discussion of the role of shared communal resources in building community shows, there are benefits in establishing places that people can collectively use and benefit from, especially in terms of increasing social interaction. We certainly don't want to abandon indoor plumbing, but we might see in shared BBQs, outdoor wi-fi hubs, and moonlight community cinemas, the modern equivalent of the ancient fountain house. At the same time, the ancient evidence also reminds us that in combating loneliness, we don't want to lose the pleasures of solitude. After all, as the Greeks remind us, this is the state in which we are most likely to encounter the divine. ¶

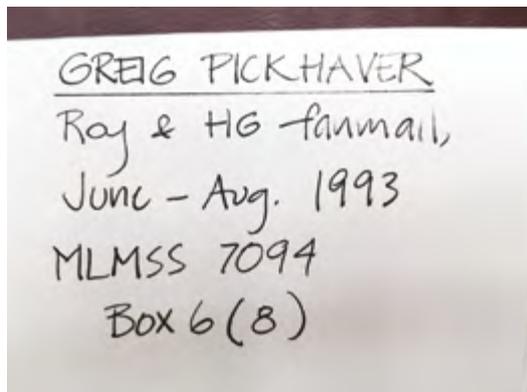
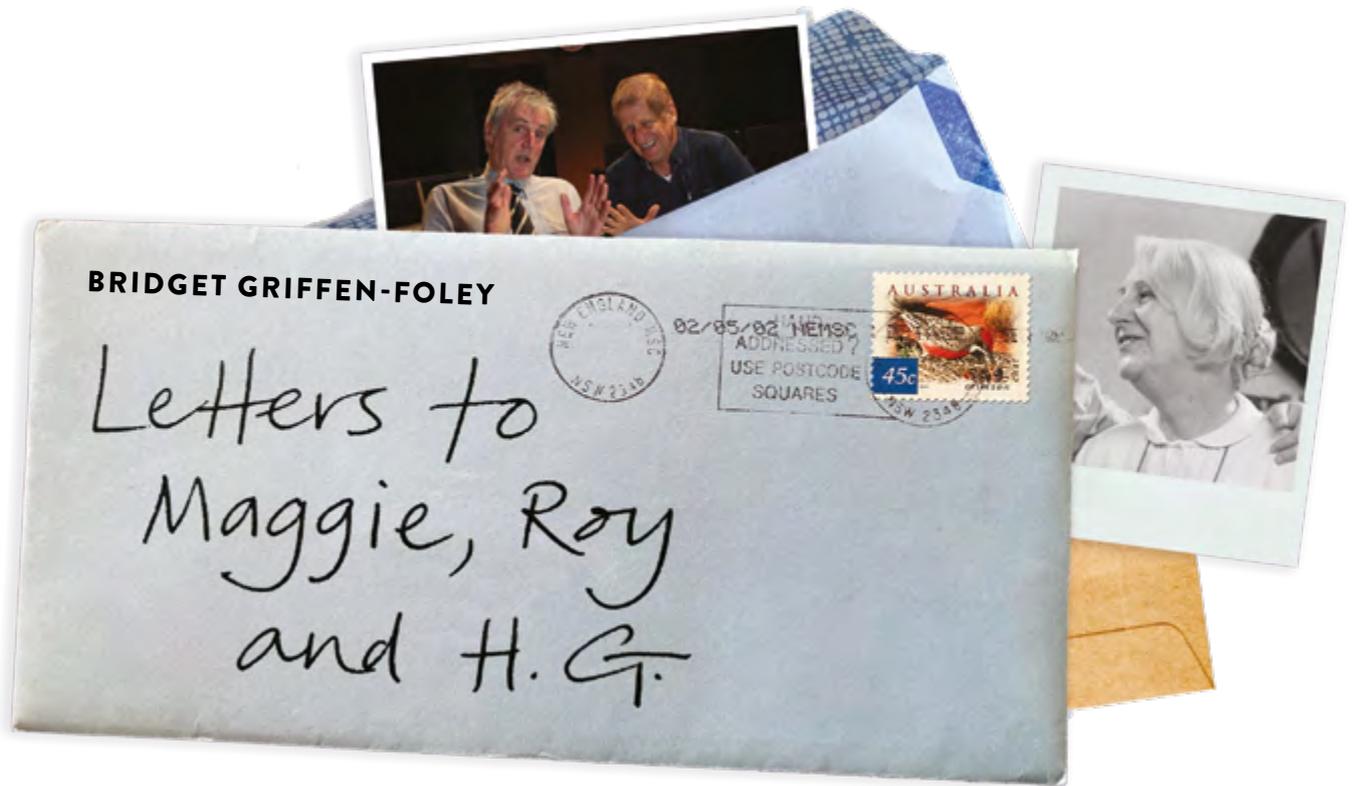


ALASTAIR BLANSHARD

is the Paul Eliadis Professor of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Queensland. He completed his PhD at the University of Cambridge and has held teaching positions at Merton College, Oxford,

the University of Reading, and the University of Sydney. He has held fellowships at Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Warwick. He researches in the fields of Greek history and the post-antique reception of Greco-Roman culture. His most recent work includes edited collections on the image of Hercules in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the influence of classical culture on the writings of Oscar Wilde.

1. See, for example Calla Wahlquist, "Loneliness minister" proposed to tackle Australian social isolation', *Guardian*, 19 October 2018 <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/19/loneliness-minister-proposed-to-tackle-australian-social-isolation>> [accessed 27 May 2021]; Charles Purcell, 'Why we need a minister for loneliness', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 2021 <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/why-we-need-a-minister-for-loneliness-20210224-p575ej.html>> [accessed 27 May 2021].
2. John T. Cacioppo and William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008) provides an accessible introduction to the topic and associated issues. Surveys of scholarship on the impact of loneliness are provided in Debanjan Banerjee and Mayank Rai, 'Social Isolation in Covid-19: The Impact of Loneliness', *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 66 (2020) 525-27 (p. 526); Liesl M. Heinrich and Eleonora Gullone, 'The Clinical Significance of Loneliness: A Literature Review', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26 (2006) 695-718; Andrew Stickley and Ai Koyanagi, 'Loneliness, Common Mental Disorders and Suicidal Behavior: Findings from a General Population Survey', *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 197 (2016), 81-87; and Robert S. Wilson et al., 'Loneliness and Risk of Alzheimer Disease', *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 64.2 (2007), 234-240.
3. For media trends in the reporting of lonely death, see Holly Nelson-Baker and Christina Victor, 'Dying Alone and Lonely Dying: Media Discourse and Pandemic Conditions', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 55 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2020.100878>> [accessed 27 May 2021]. The article also discusses the case of Joyce Carol Vincent.
4. Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) offers a rich and profound meditation on the terminology relating to love in Greek.
5. An expanded version of this discussion is available in Alastair Blanshard, 'Jurors and Serial Killers: Loneliness, Deliberation, and Community in Ancient Athens', in *How to Do Things with History: New Approaches to Ancient Greece*, ed. by Danielle Allen, Paul Christesen, and Paul Millett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 137-57.
6. For a summary of information about the play, see Matthew Wright, *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy. Volume 2: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), pp. 146-48. The fragments of the play are collected in Ioanna Karamanou, *Euripides, 'Alexandros': Introduction, Text and Commentary* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018).



'I AM BUT A MERE FAN' concluded a 1998 missive to 'Roy and HG' at Triple J.¹ In this article, I intercept some of the fan mail received by Australian radio and television personalities in the 1980s and 1990s. The article focuses on letters received by Ruth Cracknell, who starred as Maggie Bear in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's sitcom *Mother and Son* (1984–94), and by 'Roy Slaven' (John Doyle) and 'HG Nelson' (Greig Pickhaver), who have been co-presenting satirical sports programs on Australia's airwaves since 1986.

'Thousands of letters are received annually by each station' wrote a 2UW humourist in a long article on 'The Broadcasting Mail Bag' for Sydney's *Wireless Weekly* in 1928. Radio fan mail was an international phenomenon.² As one American commentator remarked in the late 1920s, broadcasting made 'thousands of people feel free to sit down and write a friendly and personal letter to a large corporation.'³ Within two years of its formation in 1932, the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) let it be known that it employed a staff of several 'girls' dedicated to sorting, and helping to co-ordinate responses to, listeners' mail.⁴

With no formal mechanisms for audience research, the ABC and commercial broadcasters were keen for programming suggestions.⁵ In the United States too, individual stations and major networks used listeners' letters to estimate audience

◀ Figs 1 & 1a. Fan mail from the State Library of New South Wales.

IMAGES: BRIDGET GRIFFEN-FOLEY

▲ Montage using detail, fig. 2, p. 24; *Australian comedy Duo Roy & HG*, 2016.

IMAGES: ABC AUSTRALIA; WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, CC-BY-SA 4.0; G. COSGROVE (LETTER)



▲ Fig 2. Ruth Cracknell and Gary McDonald in *Mother and Son*

IMAGE: ABC AUSTRALIA

size and geographical reach, and to gauge listener preferences.⁶ Competitions run by commercial stations solicited volumes of ‘mail’ that managers could then boast of to station advertisers. ‘Letters, and letters alone’ were the test of the announcers’ popularity, contended a Sydney radio journalist in 1936: ‘no mail, no proof for manager and advertiser, no job.’⁷

When a sample of fan mail was brought to popular American philosopher Will Durant in the mid-1930s, he concluded that it was mostly written by the very young and the very old, the sick and the lonely, hero worshippers—and a ‘few from the average man or woman’. Psychology Professor Cyril Burt, consulting for the BBC, announced around this time that ‘an excessive proportion of the writers were obviously neurotic.’⁸ Listeners wrote to broadcasters for a range of reasons, concluded a 1949 study of mail sent to the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra broadcast on CBS. These included the desire to make a comment about something related to a program, to express an emotional identification with a performer or show, or to register a vote of approval or criticism. Fan mail was a way in which listeners could ‘participate more fully in the experience of “listening”.’⁹ Overlooking some of this work in 1950, sociologist Elihu Katz contended that fan mail was valuable if only because it expressed sentiments which were shared, although somewhat less volubly and by people who did not write in. He also restated that much of what was lumped together as ‘fan mail’ was solicited, while noting that the focus of these letters on given topics still made them valuable to radio and other researchers.¹⁰

The earliest industry or scholarly interest expressed in Australia’s radio fan mail was by W.A. McNair, director and research manager of the Australian office of American advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, in his pioneering 1937 book on Australian radio.¹¹ As television began being rolled out in Australia from 1956, viewers debated its merits. Susan Bye considered the public ‘duel-by-pen’ between fans of Melbourne entertainers Bert Newton (host of HSV7’s *The Late Show*) and Graham Kennedy (host of GTV9’s *In Melbourne Tonight*) in the late 1950s, focusing on letters published in broadcasting periodicals.¹² Michelle Arrow delved into some of the letters received by the ABC and writer Gwen Meredith over the decades *The Lawsons* (1944–49) and *Blue Hills* (1949–76) were heard across Australia.¹³

These studies of responses to particular Australian programs and presenters helped to inform the chapter on fan mail in my recent book surveying a century of radio and television listening in Australia.¹⁴ In this article, I rummage through more boxes of letters received by Ruth Cracknell and Roy and HG in the 1980s and 1990s.

Cracknell had received letters from fans of her work on the stage, radio and screen since the 1950s.¹⁵ Her turn in *Mother and Son* playing an older woman with memory loss tormenting her stay-at-home son, played by Garry McDonald, resulted in at least two boxes of letters now preserved in her collection at the National Library of Australia (NLA).¹⁶ ABC colleague Phillip Adams—who has attracted dozens of boxes of mail from listeners, yet to be fully accessioned by the NLA or tackled by researchers—was moved to write to her during the second series:

Yes, it’s another fan letter. But if you keep tossing off these extraordinary performances, you’ll have to expect it. Garry’s Mum is a dazzling piece of work. It’s complex, contradictory and painfully, tragically funny.

Aware, perhaps more than most correspondents, of the amount of work that went on behind-the-scenes in television,

Adams also passed on his compliments to writer Geoffrey Atherden.¹⁷

When the unlikely hit was criticised by Sydney talkback host John Laws in *TV Week*, a Queensland nurse sat down to write to a 'complete stranger' to tell Cracknell she found her depiction 'true to life'. Declaring herself 'a 50 year old fan!', Joan Kemp said that if Cracknell ever found herself in Townsville, she would like to serve the actor 'a quiet cuppa in a sunny garden', or take her out to 'the best Restaurant in Town'. The nurse's handwritten letter was tentatively addressed to the ABC ('the Post Office are pretty good at finding people').¹⁸ She was not the only viewer who failed to automatically assume her letter should be sent to Cracknell via the ABC. One Victorian viewer wrote to Atherden and Cracknell ('La Stupenda') courtesy of a production she was in at the Sydney Opera House.¹⁹ Dorothy Furhagen, who let it be known she had seen Cracknell in Sydney theatre productions and 'in a great Italian Restaurant', also hoped to share coffee or lunch with her. Describing herself as self-made, financially secure, and with two Arts degrees, Furhagen hoped to discuss the character of Maggie Bear—'threatened with loneliness and abandonment...a reflection of the position and predicament of many middle class Australian women'—with the actor.²⁰

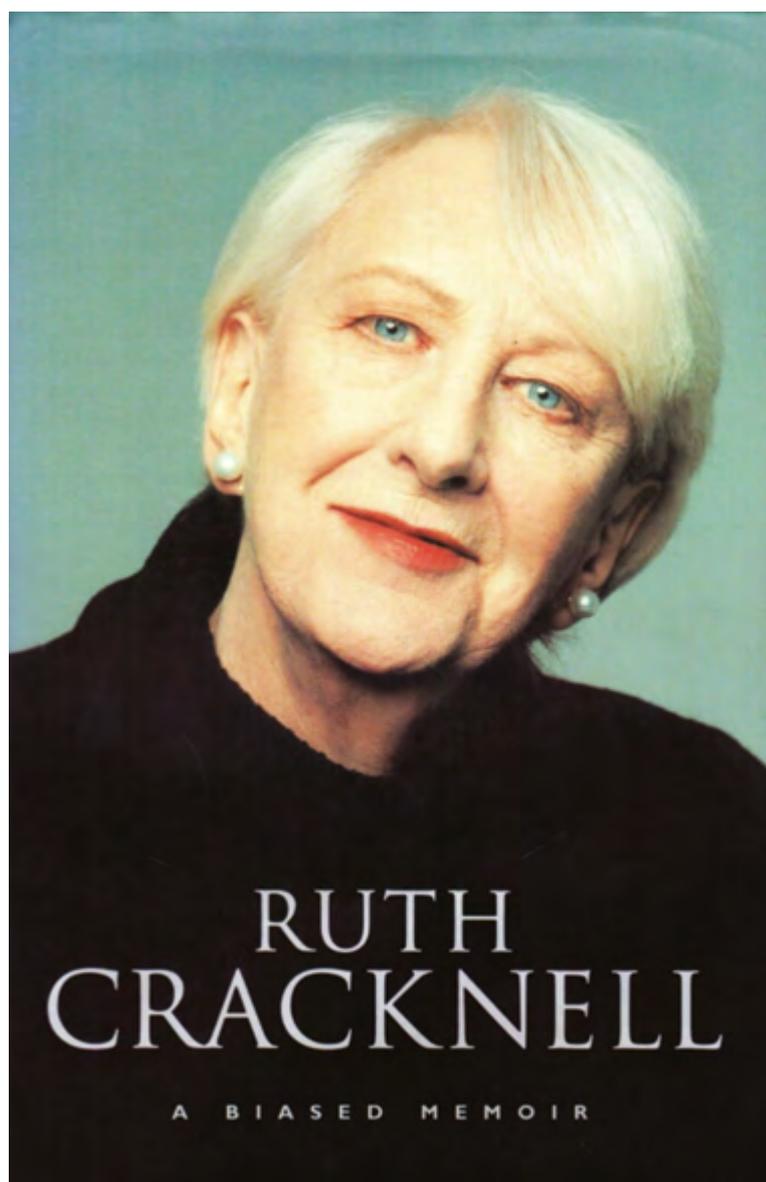
Primary school children adored Maggie Bear, observed Cracknell in *A Biased Memoir*: 'They recognise the naughty child in her and anyway there's something of Maggie in their grandmothers.'²¹ Children wrote to Cracknell to request photographs, recount their favourite scenes, tell her about themselves and their families, and wonder whether she was acting when she forgot things. They begged for replies, along with new episodes or at least repeats.²² Brisbane girl Rachel Wilkinson wrote simply: 'I think you are excellent on Mother and Son but I couldn't stand to have a mother like you.' She also attached a certificate she had made 'awarding' the actor a Logie.²³ One boy, from a property in north-western New South Wales, struck up a regular correspondence with Cracknell, updating her on his activities,

apologising for silences, and asking 'how's showbiz?'²⁴

Helen Nader, a 'migrant Australian' who struggled to enjoy some local shows, told Cracknell she just needed to hear the theme song of *Mother and Son* to start to laugh, and asked to be alerted if a fan club were formed.²⁵ Shirley Gross from southern Queensland remarked on the importance of Australian entertainment on 'the Box' due to financial constraints and 'being away from it all', with no live theatre. Echoing some other correspondents, she revealed she was a 'Cracknell fan long before Maggie Bear!', and also wondered if it was true that the actor was writing a book.²⁶ Some of the letters to Cracknell show how some Australians

▼ Fig 3. Cover of *Ruth Cracknell: A Biased Memoir*, Viking Australia, 1998.

IMAGE: PENGUIN BOOKS AUSTRALIA





▲ Fig 4. Comedy duo Roy and HG

IMAGE: WIKIPEDIA, CC-BY-SA 4.0

acquired (or sought to acquire) some of the 'things' that were designed to keep company with the immaterial core object, television (and radio) shows.²⁷

On learning that Cracknell loved poetry, Val Chubb, a self-published poet from Armidale, despatched 'Ruthless', with stanzas such as:

Tonight I watched that show
the one with—whatsername—,
the one who's always cooking
unexpected things that smoke and smell
of rubber.²⁸

Atherden recalls a viewer ringing the ABC and spending twenty minutes telling the Head of Publicity why she didn't like the program, criticising it for making a mockery of the aged. When the ABC manager ventured to suggest that perhaps she shouldn't watch *Mother and Son*, the woman retorted 'But I have to watch it, my mother loves it.'²⁹ A scene showing Maggie dropping oranges from her shopping bag into a freshly-dug grave was a particular favourite, even inspiring an independent artist to design a hoodie for sale online.³⁰

Mother and Son turned the veteran actor into a household name. In her memoirs Cracknell wrote of the 'enormous mutual warmth' between her and the show's viewers. She

was grateful for the 'real joy' emanating from *Mother and Son*, in spite of her loss of privacy. She approached her role with a sense of responsibility, attending fundraiser luncheons for Alzheimer's research.³¹ While Cracknell does not (understandably) seem to have taken up invitations to meals with viewers, she replied to their letters, assiduously ticking off each one.

The satirical program *This Sporting Life* (*TSL*, 1986–2008), presented by Roy and HG on the ABC's youth radio channel (then network), Triple J, attracted a huge amount of fan mail. The papers of Greig Pickhaver ('HG Nelson') are spread across three collections in the State Library of New South Wales (figs 1 and 1a). Several boxes contain bulging files of letters from listeners to *TSL* and viewers of the pair's later television endeavours. Correspondents included politicians, lawyers, accountants, scientists, waitresses, teachers, students, suburban football players, aspiring broadcasters, academics, and at least one pathologist and one marriage celebrant. The letters documented how audience members listened and watched: on the lounge, at work, on the train, on ships, and in pubs and prisons. Each letter seems to have yielded a response from the hard-working pair.

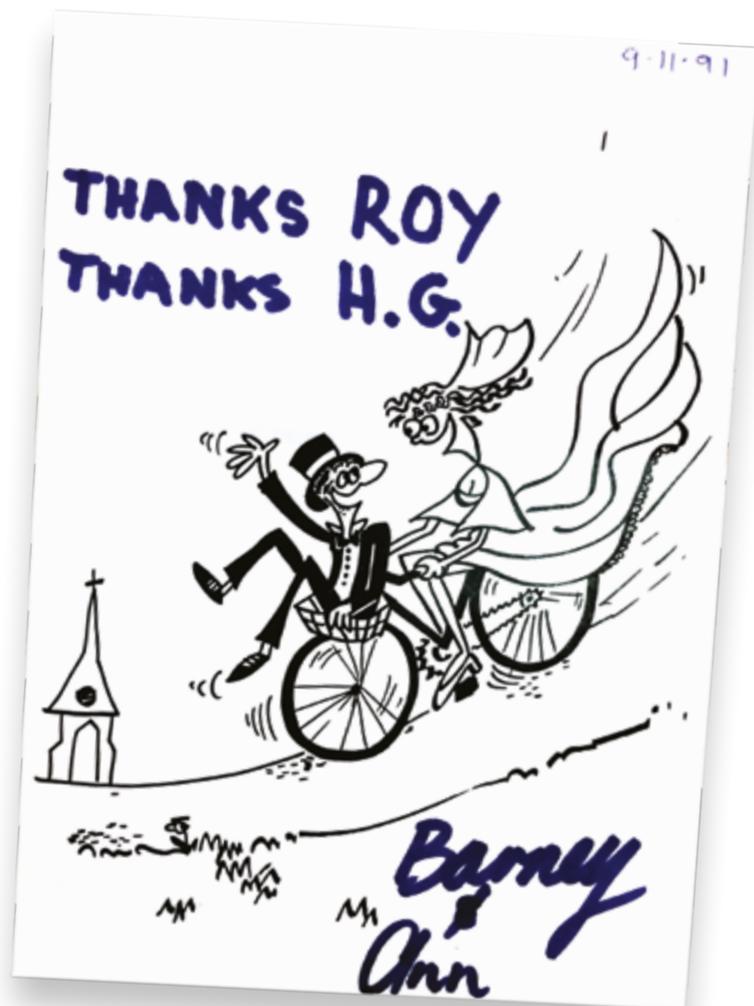
Correspondents wrote in with reports on their local football teams and clippings about local oddities, and requests for outside broadcasts from local grounds. They penned sample scripts and submitted artwork, from cartoons to designs for a new Australian flag (bearing a football), as well as slapstick entries to competitions. Some went to the trouble of naming their own teams, with John Howard and Joh Bjelke-Petersen part of a Rugby League side of 'political enigmas',³² and 'Heaven and Hell' teams facing off in Australian Rules.³³ A CSIRO scientist, (later Professor) Mark Stacey, pitched the idea of an absurd new sport—Long-Distance Golf—to revolutionise the tourism industry.³⁴

Listeners bought the book *Pants Off: This Sporting Life* (1989) and associated merchandise. One Coffs Harbour listener shared how he sat in front of the radio with his own pants off.³⁵

Listeners christened the hosts with names such as 'Consorts of Footy Commentary' (not to mention 'living National Treasures').³⁶ Letters displayed a humorous and intimate knowledge of Roy and HG's comedy and lexicon. One listener went to the trouble of creating a legal letterhead for 'KAPIL, DEV, & BLUNDERBUSS', threatening defamation action on behalf of a client: 'we are threatening to sue your buns off.'³⁷ Dr Jo Pluske, a scholar of agriculture at the University of Western Australia who had solicited an on-air greeting for his wedding, helpfully alerted the pair to a journal article on the detrimental effects of polyester underpants.³⁸

There were hundreds of requests for wedding messages and birthday greetings, some of which were met by Roy and HG. 'You made my day and that of my family' wrote one man after his fortieth birthday was recognised on-air.³⁹ Roy and HG's practice harked back to the birthday calls that had been a staple feature of Australian radio stations (especially commercial stations) until the 1950s.⁴⁰ A Sydney groom penned a letter of appreciation after a message from Roy and HG was played at his wedding, with his bride appending a note: 'You had our guests in hysterics. You certainly sounded as if you knew us well and for strangers you played a major part in our day.'⁴¹

TSL was used by at least one community college, in central western New South Wales, to engage some of its students. Teachers sent the pair a project on Rugby League by 18-year-old Rick, with whom they had been working for two years to improve his literacy and concentration.⁴² School students who wrote in included a Year 12 boy with a tape of his own call on a football match between Sydney Catholic schools.⁴³ 'Skipppy G', from an amateur high school radio station in Victor Harbor, asked for details on how his 'two Sporting Gods' got into broadcasting.⁴⁴ Others interested in working with Roy and HG were an Australian magazine columnist based in California,⁴⁵ and a young man desperate to move into radio or television who had studied some of their scripts provided by the Australian Writers' Guild.⁴⁶



One Queensland asked the pair to extend their banter to cover women's Rugby League, and hoped that a women's State of Origin team might be formed.⁴⁷ She was attuned to the self-conscious blokeyness of the endeavour, where Roy and HG made the 'serious trivial and the trivial serious', and was no doubt aware of the attention they frequently gave to the inadequacy of women's toilets.⁴⁸ An anthropology student at the University of Adelaide sent in his major essay, entitled 'Blokes and Jokes', on the ambiguity of masculinity in *TSL*.⁴⁹

There seems to have been little criticism, and along the lines of this in a Valentine's Day card: 'I find you two absolutely lewd, crude, & unrefined, disgusting at times, and *absolutely gorgeous*.'⁵⁰ In 1992 one Melbourne fan ('The Dobber') informed the hosts their act was being 'sabotaged' by a commercial FM station, with a character called 'Mick' who seemed to be based on HG Nelson.⁵¹

▲ Fig 5. Fan mail to HG Nelson

IMAGE: MLMSS 7035, GREIG PICKHAVER FURTHER PAPERS, 1988-1995, BOX 3, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW.

There were laments about no longer being able to listen when fans found themselves ‘marooned’ on the Great Barrier Reef or overseas.⁵² Letters recounted playing with technology, by for example muting the television in order to hear Roy and HG’s call on Triple J.⁵³ One couple boasted of creating their own ‘simulcast’ by taping the first part of a commentary, then playing it back with the television on mute to avoid the ‘ramblings of Big Dazza’ (Darryl Eastlake) on Channel 9.⁵⁴ Roy and HG’s fans poked fun at the sometimes risible phraseology used by sporting commentators, as well as particular (usually commercial) callers. Lazza Murphy regretted being forced to listen to Ray Warren’s calls of Friday matches because Roy and HG broadcast on Saturdays,⁵⁵ and another audience member was similarly disparaging about Ray Hadley’s ‘Continuous Call’ on 2UE.⁵⁶

The mail documents listeners following the pair to television, with a version of *TSL* shown on the ABC in 1993–94. Vicki Hibbert from Melbourne wrote of how she now looked forward to Monday nights, although her husband had nearly choked with laughter on several occasions at the pair’s terms for body parts.⁵⁷ ‘Anonymous Waitress’ from Melbourne, who worked at the MCG but was not a ‘sporting person’, found the television program intimate and unique. She described how the hosts ‘looked down the camera as though you’re [sic] in love with us’, and how her laughter sometimes caused her cat to jump off her lap. She dismissed the criticisms of some television commentators, quoting Bette Midler: ‘Fuck em if they can’t [sic] take a joke.’⁵⁸

But some listeners struggled to adapt to television, including Brendan Boon, who described himself as a ‘radio man’. He wrote to Roy and HG from northern New South Wales to express regret that they seemed to be succumbing to the commercial pressures of television and ‘mass produced idiot humour’. Boon wanted *TSL* to continue on radio (which it did), summing it up as ‘a bastion of Australia, pure distilled Aussie grit, often obscure, often exciting and always genuine’, and comparing it with the BBC’s legendary program, *The Goon Show*.⁵⁹

Canberra’s David Fredericks responded to complaints aired on the ABC’s own television show *Backchat* with an ode:

Yes they are funny, even anally so,
That is what makes it such an original
show.

...

So get off their backs and give them a go,
And if you really can’t take it watch
Channel 0.⁶⁰

The occasional dissenter wrote directly to Roy and HG, including one viewer who complained that their ‘ocker image’ might embarrass Australia’s reputation overseas.⁶¹

Another viewer was motivated to enter a weekly competition in the hope of being able to strut around his coastal town wearing a Roy and HG hat or T-shirt: ‘Besides, they are TOO BLOODY EXPENSIVE TO BUY at my LOCAL ABC SHOP!’⁶² Peter Williams from Lake Macquarie, who now found Friday nights on the ABC essential viewing, wrote a screed entitled ‘WHAT ROY AND HG MEAN TO ME’: ‘What superlatives could be adequate to satisfactorily describe the “Einsteinian” effect upon the western cultural tradition exerted by those two doyens of airwaves and screen.’⁶³ A Sydney correspondent penned an unflattering ode to ‘The Ubiquitous Kenny’, mocking the Nine Network sports anchor Ken Sutcliffe for covering everything from the Olympics to ‘Nepalese tiddlywinks’.⁶⁴

Club Buggery, which mixed talk, sketch comedy and variety, followed on ABC television in 1995–97. One fan wrote of the Logie Award-winning program being the highlight of his week: ‘I have long since forgone the pleasures of a Saturday night out to ensure possession of the prime armchair come 9.30.’ After being sent tickets to be part of the studio audience, she dipped into her rent money to buy Nelson’s 1996 book, *Petrol, Bait, Ammo & Ice*.⁶⁵ Dallas Monger created a *Club Buggery* calendar (‘I like to think that I know your sense of humour’) and suggested the pair commission an ‘Official Club Buggery Web Site’.⁶⁶

When another fan, who had ‘feigned headaches and funerals’ to avoid missing an episode, thought *Club Buggery* wasn’t coming

back, 'well the bottom dropped out of my life'. The South Australian woman had compiled seventeen hours of the radio program on tape, to which she listened to help her get through her job as a public servant.⁶⁷

Other audience members pitched whole new programs to Roy and HG. Canberra's Robert Donovan proposed a spoof equine television drama with game show host Ian Turpie (a good-natured target of, and then participant in, the levity): 'As "Blue Hills" did it for the ABC in the past, "Turps About the Horse" will do it for Auntie [the ABC] again!'⁶⁸ An electricity blackout would lead to requests to 'Auntie' for repeats.⁶⁹ Some fathers were pressed into recording and mailing episodes of the pair's programs (for radio and television) to their expatriate sons.⁷⁰

While the pair were seen on television, they continued to present *TSL* on Triple J until 2008. Sharon Nash credited the Saturday-afternoon broadcasts with helping her get through an eight-year slog to complete a Masters of Science, and included Roy and HG in her thesis acknowledgements.⁷¹ Mick O'Callaghan taped *TSL* to listen to while harvesting on his parents' farm in Western Australia.⁷² Peter Neilson, the 'mere fan' who listened to the show with his mates 'for a bit of music, to learn new words, to have a laugh and to get the footy updates', despatched a fax expressing his frustration with the two-hour time delay from Sydney and asking for *TSL* to be relayed live to Perth.⁷³

Given the extraordinary popularity of the pair, it is perhaps no surprise that a portrait of them by Paul Newton won both the Packing Room Prize and the People's Choice Award when it was entered for the 2001 Archibald Prize.⁷⁴ Five years later, 21-year-old Stuart McMillen started a Wikipedia entry on an 'Australian cultural institution': Roy and HG's annual call of three State of Origin Rugby League matches. 'They were my favourite three nights of the year ... I would turn on the Channel 9 TV coverage of the football game, and mute the audio', McKinnon later recalled. He found the pair's call, in the language of club football dressing sheds, the perfect antidote to the 'self-important, overblown' and corporatised commentary of Nine's experts.⁷⁵

In 2013, the introduction to *TSL* was one of ten sound recordings added to the National Film and Sound Archives' Sounds of Australia register of cultural significance.⁷⁶

The letters inspired by *Mother and Son* and the programs of Roy and HG contain numerous reflections on other aspects of broadcasting, as well as Australian sport, culture, humour and life during the 1980s and 1990s. For this article, I have delved into the letters received and preserved by Ruth Cracknell and Greig Pickhaver, both of whom approached their fan mail with a considerable sense of responsibility. These letters reveal that it is much too simplistic to dismiss most authors of fan mail as, in Professor Burt's words, 'neurotic'. The ABC may have further letters to the broadcasters in its own archives. And hundreds—maybe even thousands—of letters that Cracknell and Roy and HG wrote in response to their listeners and viewers may lurk across Australia.

Following the fan mail trail has the capacity to expand and enhance our understanding of radio and television history, more probably in a qualitative than a quantitative sense. Searching out and recovering the writings of active consumers of Australian broadcasting (and responses to this writing) can shed light on why people listened or watched; what they consumed (given the fragmentary and piecemeal archival record of actual broadcast production); what people valued in programs and performers; how they responded to and used media technologies; and how they negotiated social, cultural and political issues. ¶



BRIDGET GRIFFEN-FOLEY

FAHA is Professor of Media at Macquarie University, where she founded the Centre for Media History. She is the author of several books about the Australian media, including *Australian Radio Listening and Television Viewing: Historical Perspectives* (2020). She edited *A Companion to the Australian Media* (2014), and is currently head of the Academy's Cultural and Communication Studies section.

1. State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW): MLMSS 7632, Greig Pickhaver Further Papers, 1996–1999, Box 4, fax from Peter Neilson, 12 May 1998.
2. Jack Win, 'The Broadcasting Mail Bag', *Wireless Weekly*, 27 January 1928, pp. 5–6.
3. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 93.
4. *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 4 January 1934, p. 3.
5. Bridget Griffen-Foley, *Australian Radio Listening and Television Viewing: Historical Perspectives* (London: Palgrave, 2020), p. 53.
6. Charlene Simmons, 'Dear Radio Broadcaster: Fan Mail as a Form of Perceived Interactivity', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 53:3 (2009), 444–59 (p. 449).
7. Isabelle Grace, 'Favorites of the air get fan mail', *Wireless Weekly*, 10 July 1936, p. 13.
8. See Elihu Katz, 'The Happiness Game: A Content Analysis of Radio Fan Mail', *International Journal of Communication*, 6:1 (2012), 1297–445. Note that there is an anomaly in the pagination of this reprinted essay.
9. L. Bogart in Simmons, 'Dear Radio Broadcaster', p. 449.
10. Katz, 'The Happiness Game', 1297–445.
11. W.A. McNair, *Radio Advertising in Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1937), pp. 259–63, 279–83.
12. Susan Bye, 'Debating the Barrel Girl: The Rise and Fall of Panda Lisner', *Media International Australia*, 131 (May 2009), 117–26.
13. Michelle Arrow, "'Good entertainment & good family life': Listener Readings and Responses to Gwen Meredith's *The Lawsons* and *Blue Hills*", *Journal of Australian Studies*, 22:58 (1998), 38–47 and "'The most sickening piece of snobbery I have ever heard': Race, Radio Listening, and the 'Aboriginal Question' in *Blue Hills*", *Australian Historical Studies*, 38:130 (2007), 244–60. See also Megan Blair, 'Listening in to *The Lawsons*: Radio Crosses the Urban-Rural Divide' in *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, ed. by Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (Clayton, Vic: Monash University ePress, 2005), pp. 0.71–0.719.
14. Griffen-Foley, *Australian Radio Listening and Television Viewing*.
15. National Library of Australia (NLA): MS 9848, Ruth Cracknell Papers, Box 1.
16. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folders 9–15; Box 3, Folders 16–17.
17. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folder 10, letter from Phillip Adams, 3 April 1985.
18. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folder 10, letter from Joan Kemp, 18 April 1985.
19. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folder 10, envelope stamped 3 July 1985.
20. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folder 13, letter from Dorothy Furhagen, 25 May 1987.
21. Ruth Cracknell, *A Biased Memoir* (Melbourne: Viking, 1997), p. 195.
22. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folder 12, letter from Olivia Montgomery, n.d. (1986); Box 2, Folder 13, letter from Tanya Freeman and Joanne Butt, n.d.
23. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folders 12, letter from Rachel Wilkinson, n.d.
24. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folder 15, letters from Ben Wild, 11 February and 8 August 1991; Box 3, Folder 17, letter from Ben Wild, 28 March 1993.
25. NLA: MS 9848, Box 3, Folder 16, letter from Helen Nader, 25 February 1992.
26. NLA: MS 9848, Box 2, Folder 9, letter from Shirley Gross, n.d. (1980–84).
27. See Frances Bonner, 'My Favourite Things: Spin-off Products and Television Memories' in *Remembering Television: Histories, Technologies, Memories*, ed. by Kate Darian-Smith and Sue Turnbull (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 173–91.
28. NLA: MS 9848, Box 3, Folder 17, letter from Val Chubb, March 1994.
29. Geoffrey Atherden, *Mother and Son: Five Award-Winning Scripts from the ABC TV Series* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2001 edn), pp. 6–7.
30. <<https://www.teepublic.com/en-au/hoodie/2683097-mother-and-son-roadside-oranges>> [accessed 10 March 2020].
31. Cracknell, *A Biased Memoir*, pp. 194, 198–99.
32. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Greig Pickhaver Further Papers and Video Recordings, 1991–1997, Box 6, letter from Roy O'Reilly, 17 May 1993.
33. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from R.G. De Vos, 16 May 1993.
34. SLNSW: MLMSS 7035, Greig Pickhaver Further Papers, 1988–1995, Box 3, letter from Mark Stacey, 9 June 1991.
35. SLNSW: MLMSS 7035, Box 3, letter from M.G. Drewsen, 21 June 1991.
36. SLNSW: MLMSS 7035, Box 3, letter from Joe Tooma, 9 May 1991.
37. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from 'Quentin H. Blunderbuss', n.d. (late 1992).
38. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from John and Jo Pluske, 15 April 1993.
39. SLNSW: MLMSS 7035, Box 3, letter from Jamie [illegible surname], 18 June 1991.
40. See Griffen-Foley, *Australian Radio Listening and Television Viewing*, pp. 7–16.
41. SLNSW: MLMSS 7035, Box 3, letter from Barney and Ann St George, 18 November 1991.
42. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letters from Sue Perisce and Richard Sanderson, 17 September 1993.
43. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Damien Stanton, 23 September 1992.
44. SLNSW: MLMSS 7035, Box 3, letter from 'Skippy G', 12 September 1991.
45. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Owen R. Jeffries, 29 September 1993.
46. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Ben O'Regan, 27 September 1993.

47. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Karen Johnston, 1993.
48. H.G. Nelson, *Petrol, Bait, Ammo & Ice* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1996), p. xiv; <https://worddisk.com/wiki/Roy_Slaven/> [accessed 19 February 2021].
49. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from David Raftery [?], 27 November 1992.
50. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, Valentine's Day card, 1993.
51. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Mike James, 11 February 1992. The breakfast program appears to have been presented by the 'D-Generation' on Eon-FM (not FOX-FM as stated in the letter).
52. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letters from Brendan Egan, 30 January 1992; Simon Jarman, 10 February 1992.
53. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Bradley Temperley, 12 May 1992.
54. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Janine and Lou Taylor, 4 June 1992.
55. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Lazza Murphy, 10 May 1992.
56. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Bill Quinn, 28 May 1995.
57. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Vicki Hibbert, 23 June 1993.
58. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from 'Anonymous Waitress', 3 May 1993. Bette Midler seems to have sometimes included the line in cabaret performances.
59. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 4, letter from Brendan Bond, 24 February 1997.
60. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from David Fredericks, 26 April 1994.
61. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter, 14 June 1994.
62. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter, 13 September 1993.
63. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Peter Williams, 31 July 1995.
64. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Ben Nicklin, 3 January 1995.
65. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 3, letter from Helen Robson, 28 August 1996.
66. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 4, letter from Dallas Monger, 25 January 1998.
67. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 4, letter from Irene Petrovs, n.d. (c. 1997–98). In 2016, another fan, 'Snotty', uploaded a video to YouTube boasting of the 36 hours of discs of Roy and HG he had recorded: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXAPL8_8NZk> [accessed 1 March 2021].
68. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 4, letter from Robert Donovan, 30 January 1997.
69. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from John Butler, 22 March 1994.
70. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 3, letter from Archie Eckermann, 24 May 1996; Box 4, letter from Craig Moir, 28 April 1997. See also MLMSS 7035, Box 3, letter from Tim Murray, 31 April 1991.
71. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 3, letter from Sharon Nash, 26 August 1996.
72. SLNSW: MLMSS 7094, Box 6, letter from Mick O'Callaghan, 7 December 1993.
73. SLNSW: MLMSS 7632, Box 4, fax from Peter Neilson, 12 May 1998.
74. <<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2001/17781/>> [accessed 1 March 2021].
75. Stuart McMillen, 'Roy and H.G.'s State of Origin Commentary', 2014, <<http://www.stuartmcmillen.com/blog/roy-hg-state-of-origin-commentary/>> [accessed 10 March 2020].
76. <<https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/sounds-australia-2013>> [accessed 10 March 2020].

A COLONIAL SURFACE SCATTER

Deepening Histories at Jiigurru/Walmbaar (Lizard Island)

BILLY GRIFFITHS

► **Fig 1.** (top) The view towards Lizard Island Research Station

► **Fig 1a.** (bottom) Ghost Beach, Lizard Island

BOTH IMAGES:
BILLY GRIFFITHS

WE RACE THE TIDE on our return to the Lizard Island Research Station, on the northern edge of the Great Barrier Reef. Nathan Woolford, a Gooreng Gooreng man and archaeologist, and I have spent the day recording stone arrangements that line a peninsula in the island's south. We move through choppy waters along the island edge; three eagles clash in the air above us. Nathan pulls in beside One Tree Coconut beach and holds the boat against the mounting wind. I make my dash ashore, trowel and GPS in hand, to collect a sediment sample in a neat plastic bag.

Lizard Island is made of granite. The stone arrangements that line the ridge were constructed with granite, the ridge itself is granite, even the beaches are made up of fine granitic sand. Yet there are a few spots here where you can find clay. When it rains these areas become sticky, as the deep red bleeds out into the dusty sands. We are sampling one such spot, hoping to find the source of the fired clay that keeps turning up in the intertidal zones.¹

Were these ceramic sherds brought in by multicultural fishing crews during the nineteenth century? Or were they made locally? Are they part of the vast cultural networks connecting people across the Coral Sea in recent millennia?² These are the questions that drove archaeologists Sean Ulm and Ian McNiven to begin excavations



Background: Detail,
fig. 4, p. 35.



in the Lizard Island group in partnership with Dingaal traditional owners.

It has taken three field seasons for the archaeological team to carefully dig the main site: a small hole, 1 × 1 metres wide, 242 cm deep, sunk into a headland surrounded by water on three sides. As the team spent more time at the site, Ian and Sean had a gradual realisation. The immense conglomeration of shell, ash, stone, coral and soil that they were digging into had been built by people over millennia by stacking shells up against the giant boulders, filling the gaps, terraforming. The headland itself is a human artefact.

At low tide the reef flat in front is exposed. I wander across it, startling some eels, admiring a cluster of cowrie shells and spreadeagled starfish, gawking at a giant clam (*Tridacna*) that is far too sentient for my liking and watching a sea cucumber (trepang or *bêche-de-mer*) gently groping its way through the shallows. One hundred and fifty years ago this island was part of the trepang industry, their bodies dried and sold as culinary delicacies and erotic remedies. But for many millennia earlier this reef flat was harvested by Dingaal people. It was their ‘supermarket’, and you can see the remains of their meals in the main site.

Most of the shells have been bleached white by the sun, but there are a few, even some near the bottom of the pit, that have retained their colour: luminous greens, pinks and yellows. They were collected from the reef some 6,000 years ago and then buried by hundreds of other shells. While shell builds up quickly, Ariana Lambrides explains to me, it is not all or even most of what the Dingaal were eating here. Their diet was rich and varied.³ Ariana, an ichthyoarchaeologist, is studying the fish bones, identifying species, using these ancient kitchens as a window onto past reef populations. This baseline data helps document the losses that climate change is wreaking on the reef.

Lizard Island is one of the most exposed parts of the reef, apart from the deep sea edge, and it has become a trap for flotsam and jetsam, accumulating debris from across the oceans: ropes, golfballs, TVs, plastic containers and thongs, lots and lots of thongs. But it is the driftwood that causes an archaeological headache. Most sites are dated using radiocarbon samples taken from ancient hearths. But out here, the firewood might have been floating for years or centuries before being collected and burnt on the headland.

▲ Fig 2. Ian McNiven draws an archaeological section during the 2018 Lizard Island field season.

IMAGE:
BILLY GRIFFITHS



▲ Fig 3. The view to Cooks Look

IMAGE:
BILLY GRIFFITHS

This is why pandanus nuts are among the most important and exciting finds to emerge from the excavation. They grow on the island and are harvested while young, so when a charred nut turns up in the pit, we can be confident that it would have been collected, cooked and deposited within just a few months. It then offers a date, even several millennia later, with an accuracy of within eleven years.

These pandanus nuts, along with other archaeological finds, reinforce the oral histories of the region: they tell us that the rising of the seas at the end of the last Ice Age was a human experience. The ancestors of the Dingaal watched as the tides advanced, as over millennia the sea-level rose by some 125 metres, transforming coastal mountains into the islands we know today.

The Lizard Island group, known as 'Jiigurru' or 'Walmbaar', evokes the ancestral stingray. The main island is the body and the string of surrounding islands is the tail.⁴ Although thirty five kilometers from the mainland, the island group was a significant part of Dingaal social, economic and ceremonial life. Dingaal voyagers regularly hopped from one island to the next in their movements across their Sea Country.⁵ The sea was not a barrier, but a highway.

The peninsula where Nathan and I walked, recording stone arrangements, is said to be a lizard that latched onto the back of the ancestral stingray. But that is not why this place is called Lizard Island. It holds that name because that was what Cook called it when he landed here in 1770 seeking a way through the Great Barrier Reef. 'The only land Animals we saw here were Lizards,' he wrote in his journal, 'and these seem'd to be pretty Plenty, which occasioned my naming the Island Lizard Island.'⁶ Twice Cook hiked up to the tallest peak, and despaired at the seemingly endless reefs surrounding him. That peak now bears the name, Cooks Look. And the weight of his gaze can be felt in other names of the island group: North Direction Island, South Direction Island.

During our stay we worked out of the Lizard Island Research Station, which is run by the Australian Museum. On the other side of the headland is a luxury resort. Most tourists who come here are told two stories about the island. The tale of Cook confronting the maze of the reef and the tragic story of Mary Watson, a 21-year-old woman who lived on the island for just over a year in 1880–81. Indeed, Watson's association with the island is so strong that there have been no less than three books on

the area titled *Lizard Island*, with subtitles 'the journey of Mary Watson', 'the Mary Watson story', and 'a reconstruction of the life of Mrs Watson'.

Many readers may be familiar with her story. It is a well-worn tale. It recounts the arrival of Mary Watson and her husband Captain Robert Watson on Lizard Island in June 1880, with two Chinese workers known as Ah Sam and Ah Leong. Robert and his business partner Percy Fuller used a crew of Aboriginal, Chinese and South Sea Islander labourers to fish for trepang which they boiled in large iron tanks, and then cured and traded across the Coral Sea. One day, while Robert was away fishing and when Mary's baby was four-months old, a group of Aboriginal people came to the island, as they did every season. According to the colonial story, these Aboriginal people attacked Ah Sam and killed Ah Leong.

Mary Watson is said to have frightened off the group with gunfire and then, with Ah Sam and baby Ferrier, put to sea in the iron tank used to boil trepang. They hoped to be picked up by a passing vessel. Instead, the party drifted in their tank for four days, occasionally landing on reefs and islets. Mary recorded the voyage in an impromptu diary. Her final entry on 10 October 1881 ended with 'No water. Nearly dead with thirst.'

Her remains were found in January 1882 among the mangroves of No. 5 Howick Island, still in the iron tank, with her baby in her arms. Ah Sam had died on the beach nearby.

The bodies were returned for a grand public funeral in Cooktown and Mary's name quickly became known throughout the colonies. In 1886 a memorial was erected in the main street of Cooktown to 'Mrs Watson, the heroine of Lizard Island'.

The story fed an appetite for legends of valour in a young settler country, a tale of nobility and courage in the face of danger, death and savagery. The Chinese workers quickly dropped out of the story and Mary Watson emerged alone as the quintessential colonial heroine: a devoted and dutiful mother braving isolation and loneliness in a harsh, unfamiliar place. The emphasis on feminine



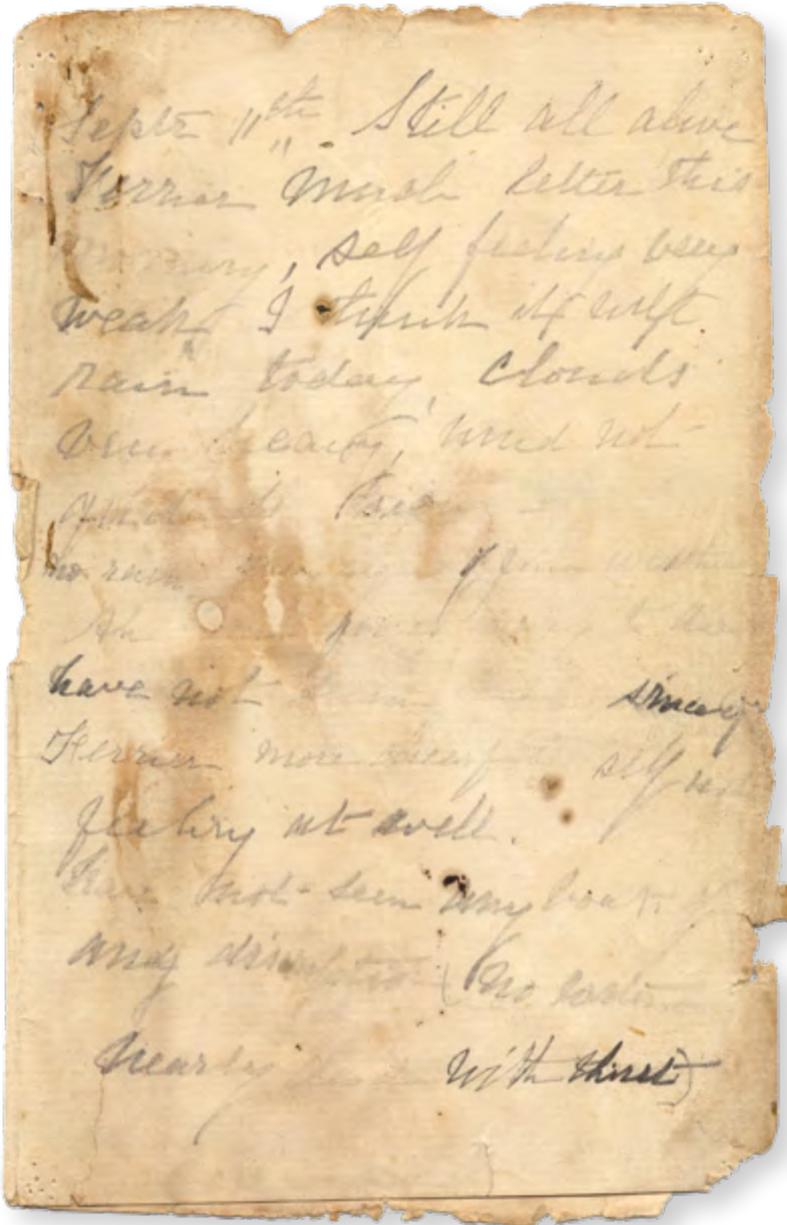
sacrifice in the face of 'treacherous natives' served to reinforce the traditional gender roles for women on the Queensland frontier. She was described as 'a beacon light to guide the steps of those who seek to win the empty, undeveloped North'.⁷ According to Mary Watson's biographer, Jillian Robertson, 'The story of her fight against adversity on Lizard Island made her a symbol of the conflict of the white pioneers against nature.'⁸

The Dingaal have their own account of these events. It is not my story to tell in this article. But it is very different to the folktale I have related.

As the historian in the Lizard Island archaeological team, I felt that my contribution, aside from grunt work, should be to dig down into these colonial narratives that blanket the island today. How is it that Mary Watson's story now usurps all that came before? And what can we learn from the way this colonial

▲ Fig 4. An illustration by Wynne W. Davies in *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 2 December 1933, 17.

IMAGE: NATIONAL LIBRARY AUSTRALIA



▲ Fig 5. Mary Watson's final diary entry on 10 October 1881 (marked Sept 11th)

IMAGE: STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND, OM81-120/2

story has been constructed? What do the sources tell us?

The archive that remains is like an archaeological surface scatter: it easily presents itself for all to see, yet it is fragmented and incomplete. The main artefact is Mary Watson's 1881 'scribbling journal': a Letts's No. 35 Australasian Rough Diary, which has been neatly annotated in black ink, with alternate blue pages to stop smudging (fig. 5). There are also six tattered and stained sheets of paper, which Mary took with her on the voyage in the iron tank. In pencil, they chronicle her final days. It is remarkable that these documents have survived the vicissitudes of time in

the State Library of Queensland.⁹ The iron trepang tank in which she, Ah Sam and Ferrier famously made their voyage was recovered in 1882 and donated to the Queensland Museum, where it remains on display today. These vivid colonial artefacts have played a significant role in keeping the Mary Watson story alive. The easy intimacy of the written word continues to invite new generations to share in Mary Watson's world.

As I read these scattered documents, I am dogged by questions about my craft. As historians, are we able to look beyond and around these documents? Or must we always view the deeper layers of history through the colonial archive?

Mary, better known as 'Minnie', was born Mary Phillips Oxnam in Newlyn East, Cornwall. Her family migrated to Australia when she was seventeen and changed their last name to 'Oxenham' on the voyage south, probably to lose the debtors her father, Thomas, was escaping. Their ship moored in Maryborough, Queensland, in July 1877. While her family soon moved on to make another fresh start in Rockhampton, Mary travelled to Cooktown via Brisbane to begin work as a governess at the hotel *Mont de Piété*. It was there, in late 1879, that she met Captain Robert Watson—or 'Bob', a Roman Catholic from Aberdeen, with reddish-brown hair and the crust of the sea in his face. At forty-two, he was the same age as Mary's father. They married on 30 May 1880. Four days later they sailed to his recently established *bêche-de-mer* station on Lizard Island.

The ruined walls of what is likely their granite cottage remain today.¹⁰ The corrugated iron roof is gone, along with the nearby boiler house, where trepang was smoked with mangrove-bush fires, and the small cabin of Englishman Percy Fuller, Bob's business partner. This site was also home to many other workers, who are referred to in Mary's diary as 'blackboys', 'kanakas' and 'chinamen'. We only know the names of Ah Sam and Ah Leong, both from Guangdong, a coastal province of southeast China. While Ah Leong

worked mainly on the farm and in preparing trepang, Ah Sam also worked around the house, cooking, 'carting water' and helping Mary make a 'mattress for bed'. Mary's entries document island life: the weather, comings and goings, daily chores. At the back of her diary, under 'Cash Advances', and alongside an account of her chickens, she records her domestic unhappiness: 'a slight disturbance' on 1 January 1881, followed by a 'great row' that left 'self half mad'. And in late February, 'Bob and self row again', 'Both very silent'.

In March, Mary left for Cooktown, where she stayed for the final months of her pregnancy. She gave birth to a baby boy, George Ferrier Watson, on 3 June 1881. Sixteen days later Bob Watson came to meet his son. On 23 June the baby was christened with the (different) name, Thomas Ferrier Watson.

When Bob was around, Mary's diary entries routinely begin with 'Bob to the Barrier', followed by a report of his haul. What quickly became apparent was the crew was exhausting the fisheries in the area. On 25 July, Mary writes 'All hands to the Barrier. Very few fish, ¼ of a pot'. The following days report 'a lack of fish', 'not many fish', 'very few fish indeed'. Watson and Fuller resolved to scout out new fisheries to the north, around Night Island. They departed on 1 September, leaving Ah Sam and Ah Leong behind with Mary and baby Ferrier. They said they would be gone for two months.

On Wednesday 19 October 1881, a group of fisherman on a 'Chinese junk' passed Lizard Island and observed several (eight to ten) large canoes and 'about fifty' Aboriginal people near the Watsons' house. The island was shrouded in smoke. There was no sign of the other residents of the island.¹¹

When the news reached Cooktown, the newly appointed District Inspector of the Queensland Police, Hervey Fitzgerald, acted quickly. Anticipating the worst, he summoned 'all available' native troopers to Cape Flattery. He also sent a search party with native troopers to Lizard Island to investigate. They

left on the ominously named schooner, the *HMS Conflict*.¹²

The party returned on Monday 24 October, with one member reporting scenes of destruction at the bêche-de-mer station: papers, books and furniture broken and scattered, a smashed sewing machine, a bloodied newspaper and three guns.¹³ The nearby Aboriginal camps were deserted, but they found 'underclothing and dresses belonging to Mrs Watson and her infant'. They stopped by Cape Flattery on their return to the mainland, raiding an Aboriginal camp and recovering 'plates, dishes, woman's embroidery, undergarment, and other articles of clothing', supposedly 'pillaged' from Lizard Island. By the time the *HMS Conflict* moored in Cooktown, word of 'a diabolical outrage' was spreading quickly throughout the colony. The *Brisbane Courier's* Cooktown correspondent reported that 'great excitement was manifested when the particulars of the outrage became known'.¹⁴

But at this stage what particulars were known? Did the *HMS Conflict* bring any evidence of an 'outrage'? Although Mary's diary had apparently been seized in the initial search of Lizard Island, it was left unread in the Cooktown Custom House for another 19 days. Aside from clothes and disorder, the only evidence the papers could report was absence. Speculation filled the void, with breathless journalists assuming kidnapping, murder and cannibalism, concocting savage imaginings.¹⁵ Across the country, news reports appeared under the headlines: 'The Outrage and Murders by Blacks in the North', 'The Lizard Island Massacre', and 'The Blacks Must Go'.¹⁶

The disappearance of the Lizard Island residents came at a time when a fragile peace had just formed in the Cooktown area. And while Inspector Fitzgerald did not believe that Mary had been murdered, his instinct was aggression. He ordered at least two 'search parties' of native troopers, led by Sub-Inspectors Marratt and Brooke, to scour the country in search of answers, raiding Aboriginal groups, taking prisoners and extracting confessions. Fitzgerald was working on the theory that three local groups had coordinated an attack on Lizard Island. He used coded language to report

his progress. As he wrote to the Commissioner: 'I have destroyed their canoes, weapons, and camps at Cape Flattery, Points Lookout and Murdoch.' The Cooktown correspondent of the *Brisbane Courier*, who was also sent a copy of Fitzgerald's report, helped fill the silences:

It is to be presumed that his men did not confine themselves to the destruction of camps and canoes, although the absurd pretence of secrecy [sic] which is cast over the action of the native police renders it improbable that the fact would be stated. If they did not make war, as war is usually made on the triumphant blacks, they very grossly neglected their duty.

Their duty, the *Courier* reported, was the 'swift, stern, and decisive punishment' of these tribes: a group of 'savage allies', numbering about '150 men'. 'Making war' apparently consisted of 'shooting as many of the warriors as could be reached, and if possible striking the tribes such a blow that they would never forget it.'¹⁷ As journalist Reginald Spencer Browne, a contemporary of Fitzgerald, reflected of the Native Mounted Police: 'If there is to be a lesson it must be sharp, and, in a sense, ruthless.'¹⁸

It is worth unpacking the idea of 'justice' that fuelled these violent acts. Part of the reason that the *Courier's* Cooktown correspondent was so explicit in his reporting was supposedly to warn against 'private retaliatory raids', whereby 'Volunteers burning with rage would shoot any blacks they saw':

If Inspector Fitzgerald has done his duty, and properly avenged the death of the unhappy Mrs. Watson and the attacks on the camps, [retaliation] is not needed.¹⁹

But it is clear that the idea of justice was negotiated, and the lines between police activities and vigilantism were blurred. On 7 November, for example, a public meeting was convened in Cooktown to 'consider what further steps should be taken to continue the search or to avenge the death of the murdered woman.'²⁰ As Noelene Cole reflects, settlers often took the law into their own hands,

apparently secure in the knowledge that they were immune from prosecution.²¹ It is also clear that there were ulterior motives for the settler outrage. The McIvor River region north of Cooktown was in the middle of a sugar boom, and southern speculators were madly dividing up land that had until 1881 been largely left 'unsettled.'²² There were other reasons, aside from vengeance, that settlers might want to drive Aboriginal peoples off their lands. According to John Haviland and Roger Hart, 'the police "dispersion" of coastal groups following the Lizard Island affair in 1881' led to dramatic shifts in social organisation and caused people from Guugu Yimithirr, Lamalama, Olkola and Kuku Yalanji language groups to 'concentrate in a few camps.'²³

Tragically, it is clear that private punitive expeditions abounded throughout November and into December 1881, feeding off a rumour mill of colonial fantasies and confected confessions. While the activities of private vigilantes were not detailed in the papers, they were openly alluded to—and even rationalised: 'The inhabitants of Cooktown are simply doing what anybody else would do in their place ... it is even for the interest of the natives that justice should be speedy and unerring in its penalties.'²⁴ They were assisted in this end by the actions of the Queensland Native Mounted Police, whose authorised murder held no basis in military or civil law.

One of the widely circulated accounts of the 'outrage' at Lizard Island came from an Aboriginal prisoner whom Inspector Fitzgerald had interrogated. The prisoner said that Mary Watson had been killed in her house on the island while she was having breakfast, with her body then cut into pieces and discarded in deep water. In this account, Ah Sam and Ah Leong were killed and eaten and baby Ferrier was kidnapped and then discarded over the side of a canoe.²⁵ The violent and florid details of these false confessions give us an insight into the settler mindset and the depths of white victimhood required to compel 'making war'.



On 13 November, Bob Watson discovered his young wife’s diary in the Cooktown Custom House.²⁶ It is striking that no one had opened it until then. The details of her final entries were quickly and widely circulated.

On 15 September, Ah Sam and Ah Leong had reported seeing a small group of Aboriginal people at South Direction Island. The smoke from a ‘native camp’ marked the horizon again on 27 September, and then, on 29 September, Mary wrote:

Blowing strong breeze S.E., although not so hard as yesterday. No eggs. Ah Leong killed by the blacks over at the “farm”. Ah Sam found his hat—which is the only proof.

September 30. Natives down on the beach about 7 p.m. Fired off rifle and revolver—they went away.

October 1. Natives 4 speared Ah Sam. 4 places in the right side, and three on

the shoulder. Got three spears from natives. Saw ten men altogether.

This is where this diary ends, and the other, which chronicles her journey in the iron tank, begins.

In biographer Jillian Robertson’s ‘reconstruction’ of Mary Watson’s life, she dramatises Mary’s death and imagines the ‘tribal men’ back on Lizard Island tearing her granite cottage apart, ‘grabbing and wrecking’ her possessions, and then canoeing back to the mainland, until ‘again the island was uninhabited as it had been for thousands of years’. She titles this chapter, ‘The Aborigines Regain Their Island.’²⁷

There is no denying the personal tragedy of Mary Watson’s short life. The greater tragedy is that her diary preserves one of the last accounts of Dingaal peoples visiting their Sea

▲ Fig 6. An eagle’s nest overlooking Dingaal Sea Country

IMAGE:
BILLY GRIFFITHS

Country. The death of Mary Watson stirred such passion in the Cooktown community that it sparked a series of vicious reprisal killings. Some 150 Aboriginal people were murdered in retaliation.²⁸ This sickening chapter of frontier violence devastated the Dingaal population, and ruptured their millennia-long connection with their Sea Country. They did not 'regain their island'. Indeed, it is only through the archaeological work currently underway that many members of the Dingaal community have been able to visit this part of their Sea Country for the first time.

The story I have related is replete with absence. Who else lived with the Watsons on Lizard Island? Who made up Watson and Fuller's fishing crew? There are references to 'black boys', 'kanakas' and 'chinamen' throughout Mary's diary. They cut wood near the house and went with 'Bob to the Barrier'. A contributor to *The Queenslander* in 1880 defined 'black boys' as 'servants who get no wages'.²⁹

Diving on the reef to recover bêche-de-mer was dangerous and debilitating work, and almost always left to Aboriginal and South Sea Islander workers. Few people knowingly and willingly signed up for this work. The infamous 'recruitment' processes for bêche-de-mer boats around Cooktown varied from abduction to subterfuge to outright purchase (at £4 a head).³⁰ In the late 1860s, in an earlier iteration of the Lizard Island bêche-de-mer station, Captain Delargy 'employed' more than forty South Sea Islanders.³¹ His 'recruitment' practices later came under close scrutiny when the *Kidnapping Act 1872* was passed. Delargy faced court in 1873 in Brisbane. The case was dismissed. But the island's probable association with 'blackbirding' continued. In 1889, a marine surveyor reported seeing a 'watchman' on the island using beacon fires to communicate with a labour-brig.³² The voices of these workers and their families are also drowned out by the Mary Watson story.

Among the documents from this period that should have survived, but haven't, are the records from the Native Mounted Police. Every month, district inspectors and sub-inspectors dispatched reports on their activities to the

Police Commissioner's Office in Brisbane. We do not know what happened to this vast trove of information. It was apparently destroyed, possibly as late as the 1930s. Jonathan Richards' painstaking research helps us read into the silence. His book *The Secret War: A True History of Queensland's Native Police* revealed that some police dispatches survived, trapped like flotsam in the archives of other government departments.³³ Historians Ray Evans and Robert Ørsted-Jensen have approached these surviving documents as a statistical sample, projecting from fragments what the whole archive might have revealed. They estimate that some 41,040 Aboriginal people were killed during 3,420 'official frontier dispersals' across almost forty years of conflict on the Queensland frontier. This is a 'minimum assessment', they note, based on a conservative methodology and applied to reports that were not always explicit about Aboriginal casualties.³⁴ Archaeologists Lynley Wallis, Heather Burke, Bryce Barker and Noelene Cole have recently approached the lost documents from another angle. Their reading of the archaeological signatures and geographic distribution of Native Mounted Police camps sheds even more light on the colonial violence perpetrated by this paramilitary force. They estimate that over 100,000 Aboriginal men, women and children were killed at the hands of the Queensland Native Mounted Police between 1859 and 1897.³⁵

Both estimates are extraordinary, especially given their limited scope. Yet the numbers fail to evoke the horror of their meaning. Nor do they begin to convey the depth of cultural loss and ongoing trauma.

No perpetrator was ever legally punished for killing an Aboriginal person in Queensland frontier conflict. Indeed, until 1887, Aboriginal people were unable to act as witnesses in Queensland law courts.³⁶

In his latest book, *Truth-Telling: History, Sovereignty and the Uluru Statement*, Henry Reynolds revisits his experience researching the northern Queensland frontier in the 1960s. It was reading newspaper accounts

that spurred him to seek to understand and come to terms with the horrors of Australia's frontier. He was shocked by what was publicly discussed in *The Queenslander* in 1880:

Here was the uncensored, unmediated story of the violent frontier, the frank admission of brutal repression and savage revenge. There was no need to 'rake up' stories of atrocity committed by unscrupulous individuals. Here were articulate correspondents who frankly admitted their role in the killing times and who explained with hard-bitten realism that violence was inescapably part of the whole colonising venture.³⁷

Racial violence was perpetrated, normalised and orchestrated by complex individuals like Hervey Fitzgerald, 'a scholarly, cultured man',³⁸ who routinely committed and oversaw great atrocities. After very publicly whipping an Aboriginal woman in 1876, he was ordered by the Executive Council to 'serve in some other branch of the Public Service where his duties will not bring him in contact with Aborigines'.³⁹ The Governor was forced to remind Fitzgerald and his fellow officers of the importance of 'avoiding the very appearance of inhumanity in their dealings with the aborigines'.⁴⁰ But he returned to the Queensland Native Mounted Police and his actions in 1881 constitute the true savagery of the Mary Watson story. They could also be described as the inevitable consequence of a society that sanctioned violence on the frontier: a public whose 'creed', according to Fitzgerald himself, was 'extermination of the natives'.⁴¹

Reynolds' book, and the Uluru Statement from the Heart to which it responds, remind Australians that this legacy is unresolved. He argues that when the British turned their backs on the policy of treaty-making, they created a situation in Australia where tensions could only be relieved by violence. On the Queensland frontier, we see a refinement of the brutal practices and traditions developed in southern colonies. The actions of the Queensland police cannot be explained away

as an inevitable part of the British imperial project; this was an Australian enterprise, with the 'chain of moral responsibility' ending in Brisbane, not London. 'As a nation,' Reynolds writes, 'the conquest of the north is our story from which we cannot avert our gaze, and it is one that reached into the early years of the federation.'⁴²

The 'truthtelling' called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart is intended to subvert and upend comfortable narratives about Australian history. It demands a reckoning with the brutal acts of the frontier and with the reverberations of colonial violence. It asks for a nation-wide process of listening to the testimony of survivors.

For historians, part of 'truthtelling' is resisting seductive colonial tales and learning to read other, often older, often painful, stories in landscapes and seascapes. It needs language change, so that Cooks Look doesn't overwhelm Jiigurrū or Walmbaar. And it requires broader awareness of the inadequacies of documentary records: always partial, always incomplete, always containing telling silences as well as insight—a scatter on the surface of a deep and layered history. ¶

The Lizard Island fieldwork was undertaken in partnership with the Dingaal Aboriginal community and with the support of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage. I am grateful to Sean Ulm, Ariana Lambrides, Ian McNiven, Martin Potter, Graham Tulloch, Lynley Wallis and Nathan Woolford for their thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts of this article.



BILLY GRIFFITHS is a historian and lecturer in Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies at Deakin University. His research engages with cultural heritage, Indigenous history, political history, archaeology and seascapes. His latest book, *Deep Time Dreaming: Uncovering Ancient Australia* (Black Inc., 2018), won the Felicia A Holton Book Award, the Ernest Scott Prize, the John Mulvaney Book Award, the Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction and 2019 Book of the Year at the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. He is the recipient of the 2020 Max Crawford Medal from the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

1. Clare Tochilin, William R. Dickinson, Matthew W. Felgate, Mark Pecha, Peter Sheppard, Frederick H. Damon, Simon Bickler and George E. Gehrels, 'Sourcing Temper Sands in Ancient Ceramics with U-Pb ages of Detrital Zircons: a Southwest Pacific Test Case', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 39.7 (2012), 2583-91.
2. Ian J. McNiven, 'Coral Sea Cultural Interaction Sphere', in *Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Indigenous Australia and New Guinea*, ed. by I.J. McNiven and B. David (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Alison Fitzpatrick, Ian J. McNiven, Jim Specht and Sean Ulm, 'Stylistic Analysis of Stone Arrangements Supports Regional Cultural Interactions along the Northern Great Barrier Reef, Queensland', *Australian Archaeology*, 84.2 (2018), 129-44.
3. Ariana Lambrides, Ian McNiven, Samantha Aird, Kelsey Lowe, Patrick Moss, Cassandra Rowe, Clair Harris, Cailey Maclaurin, Sarah Slater, Kylie Carroll, Malia Cedar, Fiona Petchey, Christian Reepmeyer, Matthew Harris, Johnny Charlie, Elaine McGreen, Phillip Baru and Sean Ulm, 'Changing Use of Lizard Island over the Past 4000 Years and Implications for Understanding Indigenous Offshore Island Use on the Great Barrier Reef', *Queensland Archaeological Research*, 23 (2020), 43-109 (p. 47).
4. Gordon Charlie, 'The Aboriginal History of Lizard Island' [pamphlet], Lizard Island Research Station Archive.
5. Robynne A. Mills, *Aboriginal Occupation of Lizard Island* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Sydney, 1992), p. 31.
6. James Cook, *James Cook's Journal* (London: Elliot Stock, 1893), p. 299.
7. D. Hooper, 'In Memory of Mary', *The Islands Review* 1.3 (1968), 39-41 (p. 41).
8. Jillian Robertson, *Lizard Island: A Reconstruction of the Life of Mrs. Watson* (Richmond: Hutchison, 1981), p. 71.
9. Mary Watson, Diaries, 1 Jan 1881 - 10 Oct 1881, OM81-120, State Library of Queensland.
10. Paddy Waterson, Anita Waghorn, Julie Swartz and Ross Brown, 'What's in a Name? Beyond The Mary Watson Stories to a Historical Archaeology of Lizard Island', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 17.3 (2013), 590-612 (p. 604).
11. *Brisbane Courier*, 22 October 1881, p. 4.
12. *The Telegraph*, 26 October 1881, p. 2.
13. *Brisbane Courier*, 27 Oct 1881, p. 2.
14. *Brisbane Courier*, 24 Oct 1881, p. 2.
15. Lynette Russell, *Savage Imaginings: Historical and Contemporary Constructions of Australian Aboriginalities* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2001).
16. *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 29 October 1881, p. 2; *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, 29 October 1881, p. 2; *Western Star and Roma Advertiser*, 19 November 1881, p. 3.
17. *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1881, p. 2.
18. Reginald Spencer Browne, *A Journalist's Memories* (Brisbane: Read Press, 1927).
19. *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1881, p. 2.
20. *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1881, p. 2.
21. Noelene Cole, 'Battle Camp to Boralga: a Local Study of Colonial War on Cape York Peninsula, 1873-1894', *Aboriginal History* 28 (2004), 156-89 (p. 173).
22. John B. Haviland and Leslie K. Haviland, "How much food will there be in Heaven?" Lutherans and Aborigines around Cooktown to 1900', *Aboriginal History* 4.1-2 (1980), 118-49 (pp. 123-24).
23. John B. Haviland with Roger Hart, *Old Man Fog and the Last Aborigines of Barrow Point* (Bathurst: Crawford House, 1998), p. 35.
24. *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 12 November 1881, p. 825.
25. *Brisbane Courier*, 19 November 1881, p. 5.
26. *Morning Bulletin*, 15 November 1881, p. 2.
27. Robertson, *Lizard Island*, p. 175.
28. This is a widely cited number in recent scholarship. See, for example, Suzanne Falkiner and Alan Oldfield, *Lizard Island: The Journey of Mary Watson* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 3.
29. Cited by Henry Reynolds in *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. 120.
30. Haviland and Haviland, "How much food will there be in Heaven?", pp. 135-36.
31. Waterson *et al.*, 'What's in a Name?', p. 595.
32. 'B. Somerville (1889)', in *Lizard Island: Some of its History*, ed. by Allan McInnes (Cairns: Allan McInnes, 1978), 23-34.
33. Jonathan Richards, *The Secret War: A True History of the Queensland Native Police* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2008).
34. Raymond Evans and Robert Ørsted-Jensen, "I Cannot Say the Numbers that Were Killed": Assessing Violent Mortality on the Queensland Frontier' (2014). Available at SSRN: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2467836>>.
35. Lynley Wallis, Heather Burke, Bryce Barker and Noelene Cole, 'Fatal Frontier: Temporal and Spatial Considerations of the Native Mounted Police and Colonial Violence across Queensland', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Indigenous Australia and New Guinea*, ed. by McNiven and David, pp. 1-29 (p. 12).
36. Ray Evans, *Fighting Words: Writing about Race* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), p. 189.
37. Henry Reynolds, *Truth-Telling: History, Sovereignty and the Uluru Statement* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2021), pp. 168-69.
38. *Courier Mail*, 2 May 1934, p. 10.
39. As quoted in Richards, *The Secret War*, p. 92.
40. Letter from Colonial Secretary's Office to Commissioner of Police 1 May, Hervey Fitzgerald Police Staff File QSA 564918. As in Heather Burke and Lynley A. Wallis, *Frontier Conflict and the Native Mounted Police in Queensland Database* (2019), doi: 10.25957/5d9fb541294d5.
41. Pol. Mag. Fitzgerald to Com. Pol., 5 March 1885, QSA COL/A422, #3053 of 1885. In Haviland and Haviland, "How much food will there be in Heaven?", p. 122.
42. Reynolds, *Truth-Telling*, p. 178.



The Compasses lies on the edge of an old straight track in a hollow that shelters it from the cold south-west wind. It's in the hamlet of Chicks Grove. In the field below, you can still see the outline of an *oppidum*, where Romano-Britons mined for Chilmark stone, and somewhere up on the ridge is an Ancient British fort that I've yet to investigate.

A thatched two-storey inn dating from the fourteenth century, the Compasses is hard to locate on a map, despite its name—not for marine navigation, but after a stonemason's tool for marking out curves and right-angles. "It's one of those places, if you're looking for it, you can't find it," says Rob Hill, a surveyor who lives nearby. "You glimpse it out of the corner of your eye—and it's there."

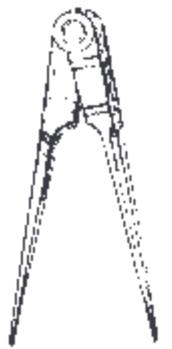
It's sheer luck that one of my favourite pubs is also my local.

I've tramped there on many a sunny evening: a twenty-minute walk that meanders behind the Anglo-Saxon tower of the church where I was married, and my children christened—and then dips across cornfields on a path parallel to the narrow river where no less an angler than Arthur Ransome flicked out his line for small wild Nadder trout.

For thirty years, I have ducked my head, and passed into the low-ceilinged, dark front-room, and ordered a pint of Butcombe.

"A healthy primitive people do not advance far towards civilisation before they develop communal gatherings for special purposes," wrote Alfred Watkins in his classic book on ley lines, *The Old Straight Track*.

Like Stonehenge, fourteen miles away, the Compasses sits at a very ancient cross route—if you take these things seriously. Watkins did. "The old straight track decided the site of almost every branch of human communal activity." The original inn was a meeting point for venting the community's emotional and superstitious requirements and beliefs—a horn lantern to show where the door



▲ The Compasses Inn, Chicks Grove

IMAGE: NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE

was, the welcoming light placed in a window slit that was not made of glass but of polished bone or parchment.

The Compasses came into being out of our need to come together, not merely to fraternise but, loosened by ale, to intellectualise and philosophise. It was to Chicks Grove what the coffee house is to Vienna, the café to Paris, the diner to New York. It was the glue that bound together the immediate neighbourhood; as well, it was an alignment of prehistoric antiquity that reached out to the distantmost points of the known world. Before the medieval traveller who stepped inside was dangled the intoxicating promise of shortly having revealed to him “new facts in other branches of knowledge outside his ken,” in the words of Watkins.

There is a wall to the left of the bar where I like to stand and sip my beer.

My story begins six years ago, opposite that wall, with a discussion about the eminent Australian writer Patrick White. I was chatting to a local poet, Keith Musgrove, whose wife recently had died, and saying how forcibly she had

reminded me of the heroine in White’s masterpiece, *Voss* for the Everyman edition of which I had just written an introduction. Keith had not read *Voss*, but was now intrigued to do so.

A fortnight later, we met on our usual patch of weathered brown carpet, a few feet away from the wall, and clinked glasses. I was keen to know what Keith thought of Laura Trevelyan, and whether he also saw parallels with his late wife Sara. He agreed that Laura had plenty in common with Sara, and that White’s novel was indisputably powerful, although by and by Keith went on to speak with equal fervour of another novel he had read.

A novel as powerful as *Voss*? I was thirsty to hear more.

Keith had come across it by accident. Recommended a book by his niece, he had taken a glance at the opening page and put it back on the shelf only to notice a novel with the same title right next to it. He opened this one and never put it down.

“What’s it called?”

▼ The Compasses Inn, Chicks Grove

IMAGE: NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE



“*The Power of the Dog*,” and promised to drop it off the next day.

The author, Thomas Savage, was new to me, an American novelist from Salt Lake City, who had died in 2003 and whose 1967 novel had appeared only in an American edition.

With some hesitation, I opened the book and started to read. Like Keith, I did not stop.

The following week I was in London having lunch with my paperback publisher who had republished John Williams’s novel *Stoner* to considerable success. She was looking for more overlooked titles, and I didn’t hesitate to suggest *The Power of the Dog*. An exhilarating drama between two brothers set in 1920s Montana, it was better even than *Stoner*, I told her.

On 6 November 2014, she emailed:

“I bought a copy.

“I read it.

“I bought the rights!”

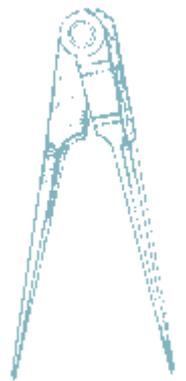
I rang Keith to tell him the glad news that Thomas Savage would now be gaining a posthumous new lease of life, all thanks to our conversation in *The Compasses*.

The Power of the Dog was published by Vintage in 2016; it sold many thousand copies, was judged by critics “entirely deserving of its *Stoner* comparison”, and then, three years later, on Friday 10 May, 2019, another email.

“Some pretty incredible news—ELIZABETH MOSS and BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH are to star in a film adaptation of *The Power of the Dog* and directed by Jane Campion! They go into pre-production at the end of the year. I owe you a lunch Mr Shakespeare.”

In the meantime, *The Compasses* had changed hands.

The new owner turned out to be the son of my former publisher, Tom Maschler. Old hands at the bar watched with falcon eyes to see whether Ben would realign the décor, rip up the carpet, brighten the gloomy (to some) interior. But the only change I observed was an improvement: Ben took down from the wall opposite my habitual standing-spot a soft-focussed photograph of mist rising



▼ Oil painting,
The Compasses

IMAGE: NICHOLAS
SHAKESPEARE



over the fields, and hung in its place a primitive oil painting of an Australian landscape that reminded me for some reason of Tasmania, an island which has long been part of my life, about which one traveller has written: “For Europeans, it represents the literal end of the world: if you travel any further you are on your way home again.”

One weekend, Tom Maschler came to visit, and during his stay I went to talk with him. He reminisced about the writers he’d published—Bruce Chatwin, Ian Fleming, Gabriel García Márquez, Ian McEwan. But there was one writer who had impressed him more than any of his authors. Patrick White.

“When he finished a book, he wanted me alone to come out to Sydney where he lived, and I would go to my hotel and read the manuscript and have dinner with him, and that became a ritual.”

▼ Oil painting on interior wall, The Compasses

IMAGE: NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE



Oh, he loved Patrick, in spite of his gnarliness.

It was invigorating to speak to someone who had known White, and I told Maschler of my own admiration for Australia and its prickly Nobel Laureate, and the strange way this had led, first to the rediscovery of another author, and then to a Hollywood film, after a discussion in his son’s pub (although some years before Ben had bought it) that had kicked off with the subject of White and his great novel *Voss*.

My story jogged a memory. Maschler said, “Patrick gave me a painting that used to hang in his study at the period when he would have been writing *Voss*.”

“Do you still have the painting?” I wanted to see it.

“I’ve given it to Ben. He’s hung it in The Compasses.”

“Really? Where?”

“It’s on the wall to the left of the bar.”

As I had written in my introduction to *Voss*: “White’s favourite painting was by Max Watters, showing ‘the country around Belltrees’. White was felled by that landscape which led him, as ever, back ‘to childhood, the source of creation, when perception is at its sharpest’. Ditto *Voss*. ‘It was the valley itself which drew *Voss*. Achhh! cried *Voss* upon seeing.’”

Early surveyors were called ley man or rod men, and carried sighting staves like wands. Rob, who trained as a building archaeologist, is a member of a mummers’ group that features characters who shuttle seamlessly between ages.

One Christmas evening, I watched Rob's troupe file into The Compasses to perform a medieval miracle play that had since evolved to embrace personalities diverse in time and status, such as Father Christmas, King George, Turkish Knight, and "the Doctor", who, when challenged where he came from, replied: "I've travelled the world, I've been to India, South India and Bendigo."

Over a pint of Butcome, Rob and I discuss the stone wall against which I'd seen his mummers perform their street theatre, interpreted by Rob as an allegory of life, death and resurrection.

"Psychic researchers have a theory of entrapped energy," Rob says. "Maybe the wall is picking up emotional frequencies."

He seems to have some sympathy with the idea. He once surveyed the roof space of an early mental hospital outside Warwick. "I was locked in with my assistant, I'm the only one who has keys, and there's a security guard outside." Suddenly, he heard noises down below. Screams, thumps, bangs, the huge slam of doors. Rob and his assistant looked at each other, as if to say: "What do you expect in a building like this, with so much energy and emotion locked up for 150 years?"

Another time, Rob was surveying a hotel on the River Severn, abandoned for forty years and with the floors falling in. "I had to climb up a ladder to measure, and I heard footsteps and the rustle of what sounded like a silk or crinoline skirt going down the corridor. But the only surviving corridor was a floor below. The door opened onto nothing."

Upon having to listen to a story encompassing Patrick White, Keith Musgrove and his wife, Thomas Savage, Jane Campion and the Australian artist Max Watters, Rob casts another estimating glance at the wall (built out of what Rob describes as "semi-coursed random rubble")—and the painting that Watters had named "House and Sheds Belltrees Turn Off". "A resonance builds up. You can't find a word for it because there isn't a word. You can't put a probe on it and say 'X or Y units of resonance'. It's something our senses feel. An 'atmosphere' is probably the best word. I take off my professional hat because I can't prove it, but I know it's there. I just accept there is something happening."

By way of conclusion, Rob says: "Perhaps the best answer does not come from asking: 'Why am I experiencing this?' Turn it round. What is it about this place that is creating that atmosphere, and where is it coming from? Ask: 'Why is this place here and what makes it survive?' ¶



NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE is an author of both fiction and non-fiction, journalism, essays and various other media. He is resident in both the UK and Australia and three of his books concern Australian topics. His writing often considers personal histories against a backdrop of major world events. His books about Australia have been influential in bringing their topics to international attention. *The Wall Street Journal* described him as 'one of the best English novelists of our time'.



CATHERINE SPECK

THE EVENTS SURROUNDING the British nuclear tests in Central Australia came alive for Australian television audiences when the ABC screened *Operation Buffalo* in May and June 2020. The series was inspired by the actual tests at Maralinga, although screen writer and producer Peter Duncan was upfront in announcing that it was a work of 'historical fiction', along with a proviso that 'a lot of the really bad history actually happened'.¹ The series was promoted as a 'captivating drama' set in Maralinga in a Cold War climate in which 'paranoia runs rife and nuclear bombs are not the only things being tested as loyalty, love and betrayal are pitted against each other'.² The characters in *Operation Buffalo* include the handsome operations manager Major Leo Carmichael who is seduced by visiting British meteorologist Eva Lloyd George, a Russian spy; British General 'Cranky' Crankford who befriends Ruby and her Aboriginal family affected by the testing; and nurse Corinne who treats soldiers exposed to deadly nuclear chemicals. Meanwhile the British High Commissioner, key Australian politicians, prostitutes and ASIO agents weave in and out of the drama that includes visiting dignitaries observing the explosion of a nuclear device from a viewing platform.

Operation Buffalo presented 'a tangential view of history', and it joins other successful Australian film productions such as 'The Dish'

in doing so, nevertheless those most affected by nuclear tests, the Aboriginal people, felt like a by-line in the overall plot. Luke Buckmaster in his review for *The Guardian* observed that Ruby and her family searching for a missing family member seemed like a 'tacked-on' element in the story.³ The historical record shows there was never proper consideration for the Aboriginal people living in Central Australia during this time.

In 1946, when Britain established an Atomic Weapons Research Establishment to develop a nuclear weapons program, Australia agreed to be involved. By November that year, the Australian Minister for Defence John Dedman announced that a joint Long Range Weapons Establishment (that is a rocket range) would be built in Central Australia. He said the area envisaged was 'largely uninhabited', except for a few pastoral leases and the Central Aboriginal Reserve, and that the Government would do 'everything possible to safeguard the Aborigines from contact, or encroachment on any area of special significance to them'.⁴ Woomera was selected as the site for the rocket range, but this was land occupied by the Anangu for millennia. The British, as the ultimate colonisers, disregarded this fact.

OPPOSITION TO THE ROCKET RANGE

What *Operation Buffalo* omitted was that, even before this official announcement, there was strong community opposition to the plan. The

▲ Montage of two images: John L Stanier at Maralinga in protective clothing showing a camera also protected in a special plastic cover, 1956 by Australian Government photographer; and photograph of an atomic bomb mushroom cloud.

IMAGES: CROWN COPYRIGHT, PUBLIC DOMAIN, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS AND PIXABAY

first person to raise an alarm was Aboriginal activist Bill Ferguson, the leader of the New South Wales based Aboriginal Progressives Association, who claimed on 17 April 1946 that it was akin to 'declaring open season on the Aborigines'.⁵ By 27 July Charles Duguid, an Adelaide doctor who worked with Pitjantjatjara people at the Ernabella mission (Pukatja) in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, exposed the plan in Adelaide's *Advertiser* newspaper on 27 July 1946. Resolutions were passed at a subsequent public lecture urging the Prime Minister to prevent the control of atomic energy from passing into the hands of the military, and to reject any actions that would jeopardise the lives of the Aboriginal people.⁶ A South Australian social issues group, the *Common Cause*, mounted a petition which was sent to Federal Government protesting against rocket bomb tests in Australia. It was signed by 10,000 people in churches, women's organisations and industrial leaders across the nation.⁷ *Smith's Weekly* ran a story in October 1946 detailing how the proposed Rocket Range 'threatened to disturb the lives and customs of over 1,000 Aborigines'.⁸ Phyllis Duguid mobilised her networks in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and Melbourne and Sydney women staged protests.⁹

By September 1946, the Australian Aborigines League was involved. This was a small but articulate urban group operating in a hostile climate of assimilation policies, the suppression of language and customs, and the forced removal of children.¹⁰ William (Bill) Onus was President and Reverend Doug Nicholls was Secretary. Both were Yorta Yorta men. Nicholls said the Rocket Range would mean 'some of the last unspoiled Aborigines will be forced to civilisation, and thus be ruined'.¹¹ In October he was a part of a delegation from the Aborigines Fellowship who met with the Governor General, the Duke of Gloucester, to voice their concerns.¹² In November 1946, Doug Nicholls announced that, 'if necessary, we will gather a big deputation of Aborigines and march to Canberra, even to the doors of Parliament itself'.¹³ Their concern was

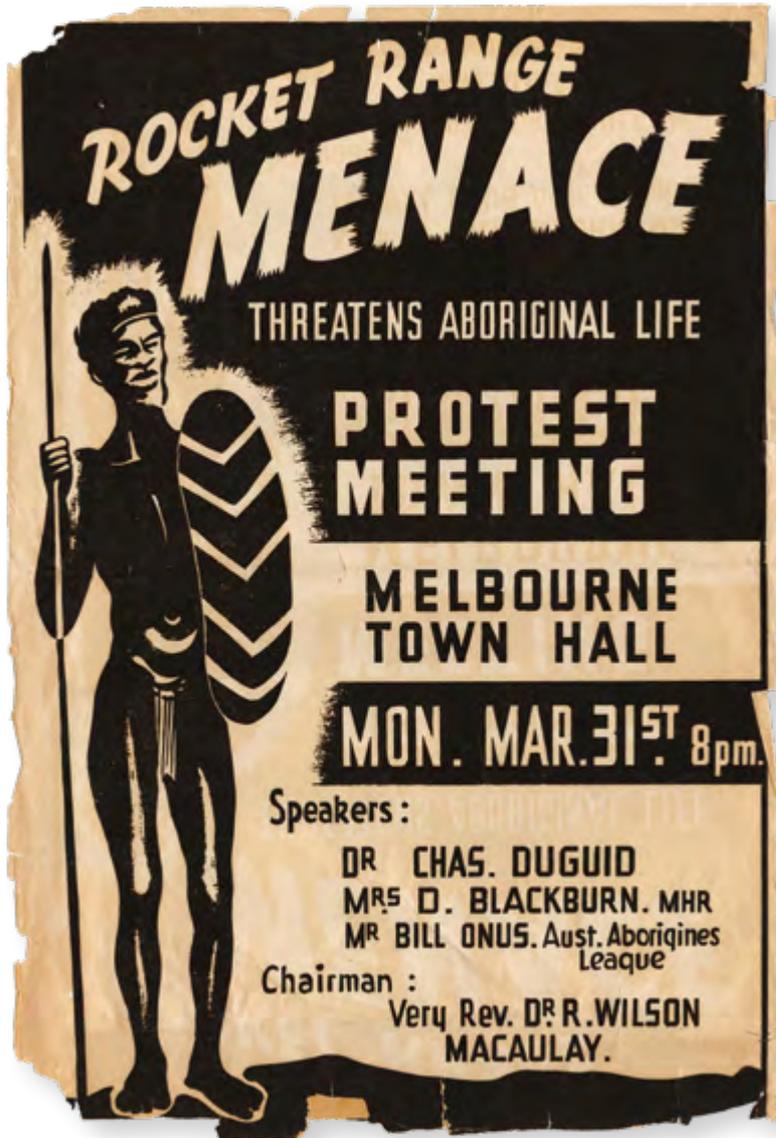
for maintaining the lands of those who lived in the desert.

Duguid kept up the public pressure, gave radio interviews, and let it be known he had letters from leading figures 'pleading with me to save the natives'.¹⁴ Donald Thomson, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Melbourne, joined the protest. He published a persuasive article, 'Rockets will doom Aborigines', in Melbourne and Adelaide newspapers in October 1946, in which he pointed out the need to preserve 'the hunting and ceremonial grounds of the Aborigines', who are 'nomadic hunters, whose lives are spent in seasonal wanderings over a wide territory, not just any territory, but the country by which each man is linked by his totemic beliefs'.¹⁵ Thomson and Duguid held slightly different perspectives, but together they were vocal opponents.¹⁶

Critics of all persuasion of the Rocket Range had little effect. Prime Minister Chifley believed 'only about 100 Aborigines would be affected'; although the government did ask the National Missionary Council to suggest an alternative site.¹⁷ The British showed little interest in the protest, and Prime Minister Clement Atlee is reported to have said that 'the welfare of Aborigines was a matter for Australia'.

The Australian Government had little real understanding of the military power they were embracing. Minister Dedman said that the 'probability of missiles falling on Aborigines in the reserve would be extremely remote' because 'the area is vast and the average density of population is probably about one native in every 50 to 100 square miles'.¹⁸ The only voice of dissent in Parliament came from an Independent member, Doris Blackburn, who held the seat of Bourke and had been associated with the Aboriginal cause since the 1920s.¹⁹ Her motion to the House of Representatives in December 1946, which failed to pass, pointed out that locating a rocket range on Aboriginal lands was 'an act of injustice to a weaker people who have no voice in ordering their own lives'.²⁰

There was widespread newspaper coverage of the opposition to the Rocket Range and how



▲ Fig 1. Rocket Range Menace Threatens Aboriginal Life: Protest Meeting, Rocket Range Protest Committee, Melbourne, 1947

IMAGE: STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, PGR 387/1/8/1

it would affect Aboriginal people, although lesser coverage of the protest by the Australian Aborigines League. This led to the Government establishing an Australian Guided Projectiles Committee to consider the issue. It met in early 1947. Its members were government specialists in Aboriginal Affairs, including the University of Sydney's anthropologist, Professor A.P. Elkin. Charles Duguid and Donald Thomson were asked to give evidence.²¹ Each sought continuation of the traditional way of life for Aboriginal people, with Duguid pointing out that it would be 'quite impossible' to keep a mobile Aboriginal people away from the test sites.²² The Government, however, chose to listen to the advice of Professor Elkin, rather than that of Thomson, his counterpart at the University of Melbourne. Elkin advocated

the Government policy of assimilation of Aboriginal people into white Australia, whereas Thomson opposed assimilation. Not surprisingly, the Minister accepted the findings of the expert Committee which concluded that the construction of the Rocket Range 'will not introduce effects detrimental to the Aborigines', and 'it cannot be considered an act of injustice.'²³ The Government decided to appoint two patrol officers to warn Aboriginal people to avoid the test area, with Elkin observing that 'those of us who know Aborigines in the central areas of Australia and their way of life know this can be done.'²⁴ A bitter Mrs Blackburn declared in Parliament it would mean 'the disintegration of the moral and physical lives of a primitive people by white men who have the habit of forgetting they are civilised.'²⁵

Given the Government's intransigence amid strong public opposition to the plan, the protesters united. In February 1947 the Australian Aborigines League (AAL), the Presbyterian Board of Missions and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) formed the Rocket Range Protest Committee.²⁶ Forty-five organisations joined with members ranging from supporters of Aboriginal rights to pacifists, Communists and church groups. Even though this represented a 'wide spectrum of ideologically diverse interest groups' with differing agendas, the committee was united on the humanitarian issue of opposition to the Rocket Range and its effect on Aboriginal people in remote communities.²⁷ Another 3,000 members of the Presbyterian Church signed a petition which was sent onto the Prime Minister in late February 1947 requesting reconsideration of the test site.²⁸

The Rocket Range Protest Committee held their first public meeting on 31 March 1947 at Melbourne Town Hall (fig. 1). One thousand concerned citizens attended although key Government figures declined the invitation. The audience were treated to rousing speeches from Dr Charles Duguid, Bill Onus and the Reverend Doug Nicholls from the AAL, Mrs Blackburn MHR, and Mrs Nankivell, President of the WCTU.²⁹ Duguid pointed out that 'the whole fabric of life of 1,500 or more of our tribal Aborigines is to be sacrificed to this

preparation for another war',³⁰ while Bill Onus said that funds earmarked for the tests should be used on Aboriginal welfare.³¹ Motions were passed including that the Rocket Testing Range 'is inimical to the welfare of the Aborigines'; that it 'violates the policy of the United Nations in regard to primitive races'; and that it 'represents a great disservice to world peace'.³² These motions were sent to the Prime Minister, members of the Federal Government, the United Nations, and the British Government.

Despite the public meetings, and significant objections raised in Parliament by Doris Blackburn, the Government and the Opposition were adamant that it was in the national interest that the Rocket Range would go ahead.³³ South Australians formed their own Rocket Protest Committee with eighteen organisations banding together. They sent a letter to Prime Minister Chifley on 7 May calling for open debate of the issue in Parliament.³⁴ Duguid resigned in protest from the Aborigines Protection Board saying it 'would mean the end of tribal Aborigines', and that 'no justification had yet been shown for putting the range through the northern, inhabited part of the Reserve'.³⁵ The Rocket Range Protest Committee sent a letter to each member of Parliament, along with a copy of Duguid's Melbourne Town Hall speech, while the Presbyterian Church sent yet another petition with 10,000 signatures to the Prime Minister.³⁶ The Government tried to take the heat out of the situation by labelling the protesters as Communists.³⁷

The anthropologists debated the issue in the press. Elkin, the high-profile assimilationist, defended the Government decision on 20 May 1947. In his view 'the project had been decided by the Empire leaders' and energy should not be wasted on 'futile protests or abstract arguments'. He said a patrol officer would 'inform any Aborigines who are likely to be near part of the range where, and when, projectiles are expected to fall and to avoid it for the time being'.³⁸ Donald Thomson replied stating he had no reason to believe that the safeguards 'could be any more effective than in the past', and that the use of the Reserve for the tests 'must mean doom of the Aborigines in

the territory concerned' and that 'posterity will prove the truth'.³⁹

Nevertheless, the Defence Projects Bill was passed in the Parliament at 3.30am on 27 June 1947. Doris Blackburn was the only dissenting voter.⁴⁰ The Rocket Range Protest Committee held one last large public meeting on 24 August 1947 in Melbourne's Princess Theatre even though, under the new Approved Defence Protection Act, there was the possibility of prosecution for speaking openly about the project. As committee chairman Reverend James Stuckey said, 'a voteless and voiceless minority is being treated ruthlessly and we aim to do something about it'.⁴¹ Doug Nicholls from the AAL made an impassioned speech saying, 'we ask for our rights, we want our children to have the opportunity which your children have'.⁴² The motions passed at this public meeting, which were duly sent onto the Prime Minister, called for the cessation of the violation of Aboriginal rights in the area affected, and a denunciation of the Act limiting the freedom of speech. However, the threat of punishment for speaking out on issues of national security did quell further protests.⁴³ The new Defence Protection Act declared that anyone who spoke out against an approved defence project would face a fine of £500 or twelve months in prison.⁴⁴ Civil liberties had been seriously curbed and preliminary work had already begun on the Rocket Range.

By September 1950, both America and the Soviet Union were conducting nuclear tests, so Britain's Prime Minister Clement Atlee requested permission to test atomic weapons in Australia.⁴⁵ R.G. Menzies, the newly elected conservative Liberal Prime Minister, agreed. He was an Empire man. Over an eleven-year period from 1952 to 1963, in what has been described as a sustained act of 'nuclear colonialism', the British conducted tests at remote sites in Australia.⁴⁶ Britain ruthlessly exercised its power over its former colony in a situation in which that colonial relationship was still strong, and Australia bowed to Britain's interests, rather than to those of their own Aboriginal people who went on to experience the full brunt of that nuclear colonialism.

The name 'Maralinga' means 'the thunder.' This is what 'echoed across the pristine desert lands' after each test, leaving behind radioactive contamination.⁴⁷ The name also resonates in the Australian imagination as the place where *all* the tests were conducted, and it was the site selected for the drama, *Operation Buffalo*. Whereas twelve atomic devices were exploded over *three* sites: three at Monte Bello off the coast of Western Australia in 1952 and 1956; two at Emu Field in 1953; and seven at Maralinga in 1956 and 1957. By 1963 a Partial Test Ban Treaty came into effect which meant only underground tests of nuclear weapons could take place. Further secretive tests at Maralinga in 1960, 1961 and 1963 may have contravened an International Moratorium of 1958.⁴⁸ The outcome for Britain was the creation for the first time of operational nuclear weapons.

Much secrecy surrounded the testing. The Australian Government bowed to the British request for D-notices (Defence notices) and the media complied. But before the tests could begin, the Aboriginal people living near the test zone at the United Aborigines Mission in Ooldea were to be moved on. The mission was closed and many were relocated to Yalata near the coast of the Great Australian Bight.

Anangu women have begun to speak publicly about the upheaval they experienced. In 2009 they produced an illustrated book *Maralinga: The Anangu Story* which described the disruption and confusion that ensued prior the testing.⁴⁹ Family groups were split up, some went north, others to the west. And in being removed from their Country, they related how they were 'deeply troubled about what was happening to their own lands, and acutely unsettled by their forced removal to this alien country'. They said that the land at Yalata had 'grey powdery limestone so different from the red earth of the desert they knew and loved', the weather close to sea differed, and there was less bush tucker because it was sheep grazing land.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, those living traditionally in the bush were unaware of the impending danger. It transpired that only one patrol officer, Walter McDougall, had the impossible

task of finding all Aboriginal people in the area and relocating them.

In March 1952, just before the tests started, the Australian Aborigines League protested for the last time at a Women's International League for Peace and Freedom meeting in Melbourne. Bill Onus spoke of the need for compensation for his people, while AAL co-founder and treasurer Margaret Tucker, also a prominent Yorta Yorta woman, spoke too. It was moved and passed at the meeting that the bomb tests at Maralinga should stop.⁵¹ Predictably, this had no effect on the Government.

When the nuclear tests did begin in 1953 at Emu Field, some Anangu were still living in the desert. We now know from the women's account in *Maralinga: The Anangu Story* that those who lived nearby at Wallatinna experienced black mist and the air was filled with a metallic smell. Their exposure to radiation meant they became very sick; this included vomiting, choking, diarrhoea, peeling skin, headaches, and sore eyes. Those who looked up at the flash such as the unsuspecting ten year old Yami Lester were blinded. Old and frail members of the community died.⁵² Australian servicemen co-opted into the test program were seriously affected in later years too, with shocking medical conditions.⁵³ The British Government's agenda, as Frank Walker observed, 'was to turn the whole of Australia into one giant nuclear laboratory. They wanted to use the Australian population as human guinea pigs for decades to come'.⁵⁴

THE CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL RESPONSE

Aboriginal people have lived with consequences of this cruel testing program for decades, the warning signals having been ignored. Their art produced decades later is now speaking back, reclaiming their history and their land. While it might seem like a delayed response this needs to be placed in context. Aboriginal people were only granted citizenship in 1967, the Anangu were a dispossessed and fractured people, they had lost their land and had a struggle to get it



◀ Fig 2. Lin Onus, Yorta Yorta people, born 1948 Melbourne, died 1996 Melbourne, *Maralinga*, 1990, synthetic polymer paint, acrylic and paper stickers, 163.0 x 56.0 x 62.0cm (figure), 125.0 x 119.0 x 45.0 cm (cloud).

IMAGE: STATE ART COLLECTION, ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

back; and the Aboriginal acrylic art movement, a symbolic form of land tenure, only commenced in the early 1970s. The struggle for compensation and a proper clean-up of contaminated land could not begin until the Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act was passed in the South Australian Parliament in 1984, and the British Government finally agreed in 1995 to pay compensation.⁵⁵

The first Aboriginal artist to protest in 1990 was Yorta Yorta artist Lin Onus (1948–1996), the son of Bill Onus who was bitterly disappointed at the AAL's failure to stop the British bomb testing over his peoples' lands. Bill Onus continued to work for the Aboriginal cause in other important ways, including the Victorian Aboriginal Referendum Movement.⁵⁶ Lin Onus grew up in a family of political activism, and it is unsurprising that he pursued art as a form of cultural resistance.⁵⁷ His sculpture *Maralinga*, 1990, (fig. 2) revisits the cause his father felt deeply about in the 1947 protest meetings. It

shows the consequences of the tests with an Aboriginal mother attempting to shelter her children from the full force of an atomic blast, symbolised by a mushroom cloud. Her protest is overt, her body language has been described as speaking 'of outrage and resistance in the face of this horrific event'.⁵⁸

Pitjantjatjara artist Jonathan Kumintjara Brown (1960–1997) is another artist whose visual response to Maralinga is etched in his life story. He was directly affected by the movement of his people from Ooldea to Yalata prior to the tests commencing. At three weeks of age he was taken from his family in Yalata and placed with a non-Aboriginal family on the east coast of Australia. He became one of the Stolen Generation who suffered from the Government's policy of assimilation. He only located his birth mother at Yalata in 1984, and later his wider family at Oak Valley, Maralinga and Ooldea. By the mid-1990s Kumintjara Brown was producing an emotionally wrought

series of paintings *Maralinga Nullius*, that are a critical personal narrative aiming at recovering meaning in the face of the violence wrought on the landscape by the colonisers. It included imagery of his grandfather's land of Maralinga which his family had to leave behind in the move to Yalata. *Poison country*, 1995 (fig. 3)

shows the dreaming lines of Country obscured by the force of the atomic explosions on his lands. He achieved this effect performatively by rubbing ochres, collected from the contaminated land, onto the canvas itself thus covering the iconography. While he points to how the British contaminated Indigenous land

► **Fig 3.** Jonathan Kumintjara Brown, Pitjantatjara people, SA, born 1960 Yalata SA, died 1997 Melbourne, *Poison country*, 1995, synthetic polymer paint, earth pigments on canvas, 225.0 x 175.0cm

IMAGE: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT GRANT 1996, ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



by conducting atomic tests there, his people's connection to country was never erased: the dreaming lines endure beneath the ochres.

Yhonnie Scarce (b. 1973) of the Kokatha and Nukunu people, and born in Woomera, is another who has responded to the ultimate colonising act of releasing atomic bombs over her country. Many in her language group were affected, and her family members are now caretakers at Woomera. Her medium is glass. In *Thunder raining poison* (fig. 4), which was commissioned for the 2015 Tarnanthi Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, Scarce recreates the mushroom cloud rising from the atomic tests in an installation consisting in 2,000 transparent and opaque glass yams suspended five metres high, symbolically raining down their poison onto the land. It is a deeply disquieting work due to the disjuncture between its 'tantalising, glistening presence' and the reality of what is being represented.⁵⁹ The glass yam refers to the tubular plant, the yam, a staple of the Aboriginal diet for those in the bush, which was destroyed in this region by the atomic

blasts. The medium of glass is especially apt because the extreme heat from the atomic tests turned the red sandy earth at Maralinga into green glass balls in a process known as vitrification.

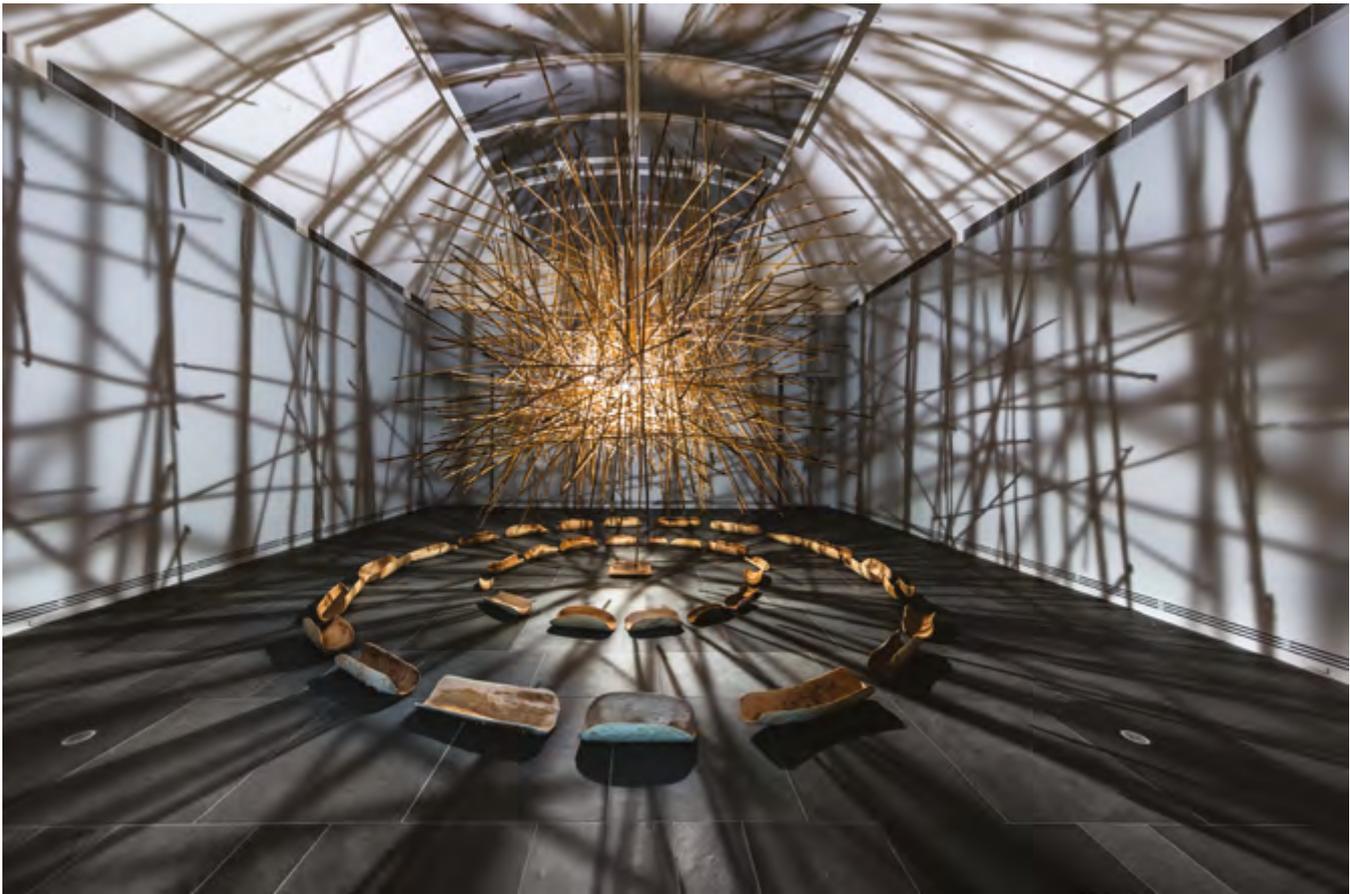
Perhaps the most extraordinary response to the nuclear tests in Central Australia is *Kulata Tjuta* (fig. 5) which consisted in traditional spears, kulata, assembled to form the spherical shape of a mushroom cloud emanating from an atomic bomb test. A bright light, the flash from the explosion, was at its centre, and beneath were empty piti (food gathering bowls), empty because the land as a source of their food had been contaminated. In an adjoining gallery space a video installation of 9 screens showed archival footage of Country, while artists spoke, many for the first time publicly, about their memories and experiences of being close by the test site. This joint exhibit by sixty men and women, many senior Anangu artists in the APY Lands, was shown at the 2017 Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia.

▼ Fig 4. Yhonnie Scarce, Kokatha / Nukunu people, SA, born 1973, Woomera SA, *Thunder raining poison*, 2015, Adelaide, blown glass yams, dimensions variable, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2016, with support by Susan Armitage in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. Installation image at Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, 2015, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

IMAGE: ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE

PHOTO: SAUL STEED





▲ Fig 5. *Kulata Tjuta*, 2017, APY Art Centre Collective, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytatjara Lands, South Australia, wood, spinifex, resin, kangaroo tendon, plus 6 channel DVD with sound, Acquisition through Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP, 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia. For a complete listing of artists visit www.agsa.sa.gov.au/collection-publications/collection/works/kulata-tjuta/64243/

IMAGE: ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

As Iluwanti Ken, an elder, said: ‘This story has framed everything in my life and the life of my younger sister Mary. We lost our parents and were raised by a new family. ... I know the sicknesses that have come from the Black Mist. I know the bomb has affected the younger generation as well, that trauma has gone down the family line. We elders have lived with this illness in our bodies, and the sadness in our hearts. Many Anangu lost their lives. It has been hard for many of us to take our minds back to these painful memories. It is only now we can share these stories, and it is a painful process. We are doing so because we know it is important to record our memories. It is important that this story is known.’⁶⁰

This was the first time the spears (*kulata*) Anangu men have always made to protect Country, were shown to confront the nuclear explosions that changed the course of their lives. As elder, Mumu Mike Williams (1952–2019) said, ‘the *kulata* (spears) are a fence around our Country and culture. Through the bomb at Emu Junction the whitefellas tried to break down our fence. There were many

Anangu, my family members, who were lost and many more who were sick from the impact of the bomb—but the *tjilpies* (old men) kept making *kulata*, with the sons and grandsons. They kept strong our culture and now we are still here today. Hundreds and thousands of spears have been made since that sad time of the bomb tests, and the fence is stronger than ever.’⁶¹ The 550 spears exhibited as the glow from the mushroom cloud above the empty *piti*, can be seen as the Anangu rebutting this shameful act of nuclear colonialism at last.

CONCLUSION

The nuclear tests in Central Australia are a dark chapter in our nation’s colonial history of the Cold War era, which protest groups failed to avert. The callous indifference shown to the Aboriginal inhabitants is an especially shocking chapter which contemporary First Nations artists are reclaiming and critiquing. While *Operation Buffalo* may have played lightly with history, it did shine a light on a national tragedy that is still not widely known. ¶



CATHERINE SPECK is an art historian whose work focuses on the gendered representation of war and wartime in Australian art. Her publications have won critical praise for their outstandingly original re-envisioning of the landscape

of war through the humane gaze of numerous women artists, both minor and major. Professor Speck's work is also highly regarded for being culturally comparative and statistical, giving her scholarship a broader and more effective argument. She developed the concept of 'Australian art without borders', which defines the contribution of expatriate artists to art history and national narratives. She is currently Professor of Art History at the University of Adelaide.

1. Quoted in Luke Buckmaster, 'Operation Buffalo Review: Maralinga nuclear testing rendered as part-drama, part-farce', *The Guardian*, 1 June 2020, online <<https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/jun/01/operation-buffalo-review-maralinga-nuclear-testing-rendered-as-part-drama-part-farce>> [accessed 14 March 2021].
2. *Operation Buffalo*, ABC iview, <<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/operation-buffalo>> [accessed 14 March 2021].
3. Buckmaster, p. 4.
4. John Dedman cited in Sue Davenport, Peter Johnson and Yuwali, *Cleared Out: First Contact in the Western Desert* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005) p. 16.
5. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 April 1946, cited in Paul Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines August 1945–August 1947' (unpublished honours history thesis, La Trobe University, 1980), p. 8.
6. Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines', p. 15.
7. Alison Holland, 'Saving the Aborigines: The White Woman's Crusade: A Study of Gender, Race and the Australian Frontier 1920–1960s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New South Wales, 1998), pp. 251, 253.
8. 'Aborigines and Rockets', *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney), 12 October 1946, p. 31.
9. Phyllis Duguid was State and National Superintendent of the 'Australian Aborigines Department' of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Melbourne women protested on 9 August 1946 about the use of atomic energy for destructive purposes; Sydney women opposed the construction of the rocket range near the Central Aboriginal Reserve: Holland, 'Saving the Aborigines', p. 249.
10. The AAL was a political action group that Yorta Yorta man William Cooper (1861–1941) formed in Melbourne in 1936. See Sylvia Kleinert, 'Rear-vision Mirror: A Koori Context', in *Urban Dingo: The Art and Life of Lin Onus 1948–1996*, ed. by Margo Neale (South Brisbane: Craftsman House and Queensland Art Gallery, 2000), pp. 25–26.
11. *Herald*, 3 September 1946 cited in Richard Broome, *Fighting Hard: The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2015), p. 29.
12. Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines', p. 24.
13. 'Aborigines "Will March To Canberra"', *News* (Adelaide), 20 November 1946, p. 3.
14. 'Letters Urge Doctor to "Fight On" for Natives', *News* (Adelaide), 24 October 1946, p. 4.
15. Donald Thomson, 'Rockets Will Doom Aborigines', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 11 October 1946, p. 4; Donald Thomson, 'Rocket Tests Will Mean Doom For the Aborigines', *News* (Adelaide), 21 October 1946, p. 2.
16. Geoffrey Gray, 'A Deep-seated Aversion or a Prudish Disapproval: Relations with Elkin', and Bain Attwood, 'Anthropology, Aboriginality and Aboriginal Rights' in *Donald Thomson: The Man and the Scholar*, ed. by Bruce Rigsby and Nicolas Petersen (Canberra: Academy of Social Sciences, 2005), pp. 91–97; 101–16. Sitarani Kerin, "'Doctor Do Good?": Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Politics, 1930s–1970s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Australian National University, 2004), p. 95.
17. 'Missions Asked To Suggest A Rocket Range', *News* (Adelaide), 15 October 1946, p. 4.
18. 'Rocket Range Doubts', *News*, 16 October 1946, p. 2; Minister Dedman cited in: 'Rocket Risk to Natives. "Negligible," Says Minister', *The Advertiser*, 23 November 1946, p. 1.
19. Carolyn Rasmussen, 'Doris Blackburn MHR: Radical and Representative', in *Double Time: Women in Victoria—One Hundred and Fifty Years*, ed. by Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1985), pp. 353–63.
20. From Mrs Blackburn, Motion put on Notice, 16 December 1946, Commonwealth Parliament, *Hansard*, 6 March 1947, p. 435.
21. Davenport, Johnson and Yuwali, p.18.
22. Duguid cited in Kerin, p. 88.
23. Statement by the Minister 10 March 1947; 'Rocket Range Experiments "Will Not Menace Aborigines"', *The Age* (Melbourne), 7 March 1947, p. 12.
24. A.P. Elkin, 'Guided Projectiles and the Welfare of Aborigines', *Australian Journal of Science*, 9:6 (1947), 97–98 (p. 98).
25. 'Woman MHR Bitter on Rocket Range', *Northern Star* (Lismore), 7 March 1947, p. 5.
26. 'Rocket Range Protests by Missions Board', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 27 February 1947, p. 18.
27. Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines', p. 48.
28. 'Petition by Church on Rocket Site', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 22 February 1947, p. 5.
29. 'Rocket Test Plans', *The Age*, 28 March 1947, p. 3.
30. Charles Duguid, *The Rocket Range, Aborigines and War: An Address Delivered at the Town Hall, Melbourne, 31 March 1947*, Rocket Range Protest Committee, Melbourne, 1947, pp. 5–16 (pp. 10–15).

31. 'Protest Against Rocket Range Idea', *Barrier Daily Truth* (Broken Hill), 2 April 1947, p. 1.
32. Duguid, p. 16.
33. 'A Lone Woman Against Rocket Range Plan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1947, p. 2; Doris Blackburn, Australia, House of Representatives, 1947, *Debates*, 190, 438–39.
34. 'Protest To Prime Minister', *The Advertiser*, 8 May 1947, p. 3.
35. 'Protest Over Rockets', *News* (Adelaide), 15 May 1947, p. 1.
36. 'Letters Sent to M.Ps. on Rocket Range', *News* (Adelaide) 16 June 1947, p. 4.
37. Kerin, p. 9; 'Protest Over Rockets', *News* (Adelaide), 15 May 1947 p. 1; Deborah Wilson, 'Different White People: Communists, Unionists and Aboriginal Rights 1946–1972 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Tasmania, 2013), pp. 120–151.
38. A.P. Elkin, 'Aborigines not Doomed by Rocket Project', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 1947, p. 2.
39. Donald Thomson, *The Aborigines and the Rocket Range*, Rocket Range Committee, May 1947; 'Natives Doomed by Rocket Range', *The Mail* (Adelaide), 24 May 1947, p. 2.
40. 'Members slept when Rocket Bill passed—says Mrs Blackburn', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 27 June 1947, p.3.
41. 'US Experts to See our Rocket Tests', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 26 July 1947, p. 3.
42. 'Aborigines' rights "violated"; rocket protest', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 25 August 1947, p. 4.
43. Wilson, 'Different White People', p. 147.
44. 'Approved Defence Projects Protection, no. 47, of 1947', *Commonwealth Acts*, 1947, 303–04.
45. The US detonated a plutonium bomb at Bikini Atoll in July 1946; the Soviet Union exploded its first atom bomb in August 1949: the US retaliated in 1951 testing their first two thermonuclear fusion weapons at Eniwetok Atoll. The Soviet Union responded exploding the same kind of bomb in August 1953.
46. Elizabeth Tynan, 'Thunder on the Plain', in *Black Mist, Burnt Country: Testing the Bomb, Maralinga and Australian Art* (Upwey, Vic: Burinja, Dandenong Ranges Cultural Centre, 2016), pp. 21–35 (p. 21).
47. Tynan, p. 21.
48. Tynan, pp. 23–24.
49. Alice Cox, Margaret May, Pansy Woods, Mabel Queama, Marjorie Sandimar, Yvonne Edwards, Mima Smart and Janet May worked as translators with non-Aboriginal author Christobel Mattingley, while Dora Queama, Hilda Moodoo, Audra Bridley and Noelene Bridley provided the illustrations for the book.
50. Yalata and Oak Valley Communities; with Christobel Mattingly, *Maralinga: The Anangu Story* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009), p. 35.
51. 'Stop deadly atomic blast in Australia', *Tribune* (Sydney), 16 April 1952, p. 2.
52. *Maralinga: The Anangu Story*, p. 39.
53. Roger Cross and Avon Hudson, *Beyond Belief: The British Bomb Tests: Australia's Veterans Speak Out*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2005), pp. 56–75.
54. Frank Walker, *Maralinga: The Chilling Expose of our Secret Nuclear Shame and Betrayal of our Troops and Country* (Sydney: Hachette, 2014), p. ix.
55. \$45,250,000 is placed in a trust for this purpose: *Maralinga: The Anangu Story*, p. 59.
56. Bill Onus was President in 1967 of Aborigines Advancement League (Victoria): Sylvia Kleinert, 'Bill Onus b. 15 November 1906', *Design and Australia Online* <<https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/bill-onus/biography>> [accessed 9 October 2019].
57. Margo Neale, 'Lin Onus b. 4 December 1948', *Design and Australia Online*, <<https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/lin-onus/biography/>> [accessed 9 October 2019].
58. J.D. Mittmann, 'Atomic testing in Australian art', in *Black Mist, Burnt Country*, pp. 36–65 (p. 50).
59. Tina Baum, 'Yhonnie Scarce', in *Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial*, ed. by Tina Baum (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2017), p. 114. The title of this paper refers to this art work.
60. Iluwanti Ken in 'The Kulata Tjuta Project', in Nici Cumpston, *Tarnanthi: Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2017), pp. 40–43 (p. 42).
61. Mumu Mike Williams in 'The Kulata Tjuta Project', in Cumpston, p. 42.

The Present, the Past and the Work

PAUL EGGERT

TO EDIT IS TO PRESENT, to make the text of a work present for readers. Something so simple in principle ought to be straightforward in practice, but it is not. A partially documented past and the variousness of the present are tricky to keep in a sensible relation to one another. This is true as much for conservators of art objects and historic buildings as it is for scholarly editors of literary works and musicologists editing musical scores. It is a matter of articulating, before one can begin sensibly to balance them, the competing demands of the past and the present in the moment that the editor or conservator intervenes between them.¹

The following poem nicely localises the general problem. Published in 1902 in a volume entitled *Poems of the Past and the Present*, 'The Self-Unseeing' is deceptively simple. It was written by a man in his early sixties, Thomas Hardy, famously the author of the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The poem is about returning to his childhood home, a large thatched cottage in Dorset. Hardy's father had been a successful builder locally; but he could not be considered a gentleman. Hardy's mother was determined the son would do better. So the young Hardy became an architect and worked in London; as a professional, he rose in the world. This younger Hardy, the architect, specialised for a time in the restoration of medieval churches.

The later Hardy, the novelist and poet, ceaselessly returned in imagination and spirit to the scenes of his childhood and young manhood. He breathed deeply of the air of the past. He was at his most alive there. But he refused the tempting consolations of nostalgia and sentimentality as delusions. This refusal of easy familiarity is evident in the poem. Its attempt to bring the past into the present is riddled with paradox, even though at first reading the situation seems simpler than that:

The Self-Unseeing

Here is the ancient floor,
Footworn and hollowed and thin,
Here was the former door
Where the dead feet walked in.

She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream;
Blessings emblazoned that day;
Everything glowed with a gleam;
Yet we were looking away!²

The sense of place is wonderfully firm. It is registered with the firm trochaic beat on the opening word 'Here'—a confident note repeated at the beginning of the third line. Security of place in the old family home prompts the experience of the past. But time is nowhere near as obliging as place. Rather,

Background:
Portrait of Thomas
Hardy by William
Strang; Signature of
Thomas Hardy on a
letter to James M.
Barrie, 1924.

IMAGES: WIKIMEDIA
COMMONS, PUBLIC
DOMAIN MARK 1.0

► Fig 1. St Juliot's Church, Cornwall.
IMAGE: SUE TULLOCH



▼ Fig 2. Thomas Hardy memorial tablet, St Juliot's Church, Cornwall.
IMAGE: ROGER MECHAN, SHUTTERSTOCK



it shifts, extends, withdraws, as the gaze of the visitor-poet to his old home wanders across the scene, which becomes both present and past simultaneously. There is, there can be, the poem seems to say, no clear temporal differentiation since the past is only available in the present.

The quandary is apparent in the very first line where we read that ancientness 'is': 'Here

is the ancient floor'. This is odd. The floor that is 'footworn and hollowed and thin' is in that condition in the poem's present. On the other hand, the door is now a 'former door', but is it formerness in the present or in the past? Chronology half falls into place, but not quite, when, in the following line, it is troubled by this dislocating locution: 'Here was the former door / Where the dead feet walked in'. It is a chastening, grim, almost horrible thought. They were not dead as they walked in, but yet they are now; and feet standing in for people is dehumanising, suggesting that a stoic refusal of connection to the dead is happening here. Coarsening the expression in this way evidently helps the poet, in the act of writing, to steady himself so as to keep at bay an unbidden wave of sentimentality that might otherwise cloud his vision.

Despite this instinctive precaution, the threat of the past remains in place, and the present courts its return. As we soon see in the next stanza, defended against or not, the past will not be walled in, even if entry to it has to be earned. Here we are granted the simplicity of the ordinary past tense, with the domestic

scene of memory now uncomplicatedly in the past. It is a welcome and touching release after the sombreness of the first stanza:

She sat here in her chair,
Smiling into the fire;
He who played stood there,
Bowing it higher and higher.

Hardy's father, in fact, was an amateur musician. He played at weddings and harvest festivals as part of a village group in a still essentially pre-industrial Dorset. Hardy's own roots were firmly in that past. He returned repeatedly to it for the subject matter of his novels and poems. When he gave up architecture in London and returned to live in Dorset, he took up his abode in a modern house that he had designed himself: this one had plans and was of the Victorian present. It served as his staging post for his forays into the past of Wessex, the locale he invented and gradually elaborated in his novels based on Dorset and its surrounding counties.

Hardy had already begun cultivating antiquarian interests, reading Hutchins's *History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset* in the late 1870s. When he moved back to Dorset permanently in 1883, he joined the local antiquarian club, served on the governing board of the Dorset County Museum, and read systematically through the *Dorset County Chronicle*, starting at 1826. Then, in autumn 1888, he undertook a walking tour to explore the countryside where *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* would be set.

For *Tess*, surface detail and local colour would have sufficed for his urban readers, but Hardy had too great a respect for the truth and its disconcerting paradoxes to take the shortcut. He knew well that the old way of rural living was fast slipping away, but, doggedly, Hardy would not give in to the allure of nostalgia, to merely subjective yearnings for that past or to a watery Romanticism about the beauties of a capital-N Nature in Dorset.

In his living and in his imagination he was obliged to shuttle continually between a still-potent past and the unignorable present. As a young architect responsible for making decisions about the repair and restoration of



◀ Fig 3. Thomas Hardy, by W. & D. Downey, carbon print, 1894, 4 x 21/2 in. (102 x 62 mm) image size, acquired Harrison Collection, 1952, Photographs Collection, NPG x17360

IMAGE: © NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

medieval church buildings (see figs 1 and 2), he would have had in mind the self-conscious historicising that such influential figures as Augustus W. N. Pugin, George Gilbert Scott, William Butterfield, and George Edmund Street imposed in England and Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc in France. But Hardy was sceptical of its benefits and in later years would become scathing about its effects. He must have lived the modern quandary of the simultaneous retrievability and irretrievability of the past, one that extends down to us today. The poem is just a case in small of this general condition to which he was acutely sensitised.

Despite its blessed simplicity, the poem reveals some sophisticated lessons. The already noted use of the simple past tense in the second stanza is complicated in its second and fourth lines by the use of present-continuous forms—'Smiling', 'Bowing'—which refuse to remain in the past. At first they seem to reach forward into the present of observation, out of the past: but that illusion of their continuing presence, or present-ness, cannot survive as the last stanza pulls back from the intense recollection of that scene. It retreats to a more

generalising description where the past is, reluctantly, put back in its bottle:

Childlike, I danced in a dream;
Blessings emblazoned that day;
Everything glowed with a gleam;
Yet we were looking away!

The distinct end-of-line pauses enacted through their semicolons counteract the potential for a consoling flow of recollection, giving us instead a series of staccato realisations.

The poem's conclusion, 'Yet we were looking away!', marks a sobering retreat into reflection in the present. But the awareness itself, although of the present, is paradoxically about an entrapment in the past. Then, in the past, one could have the moment but could not know its meaning; now, in the present, one can know the meaning but cannot have the moment. It is a double helix of choice, like flypaper on which we are stuck and cannot break free. The past refuses to remain there. It haunts a present that cannot help but gravitate towards it. We are implicated in the past; it is implicated in us, now.

That, I take it, is what the poem, at its most general, is saying. At the end of the day it is the object or the building, or perhaps the landscape, which carries one back. In other words, the material object is the past's lifeline to the present. But it requires human agency to activate it. There are ways, and ways, of doing it. The mute testimony of objects can be redeemed by our mode of address to them. At its best, conservation, communicated by curation, is one of those modes. None of them is straightforward or unproblematic.

Normally we assume that a poem, as an intangible work, may simultaneously take variant forms—versions—without affecting its identity. In fact, this one was originally called in manuscript 'Unregarding' before Hardy changed the title to 'The Self-Unseeing'. In contrast, and again traditionally at least, we tend to think that tangible artworks or buildings have a fixed physical identity, that the work is the object. As an architect and church restorer faced with the realities of

buildings' decay, Hardy knew that their identity was not stable. Similarly, in the poem, he cannot help registering the fact, as he returns to his childhood home, that a door, once in this position, has since been filled in. As Stewart Brand has eloquently reminded us, no house remains the same. Indeed, all architectural forms are in a slow process of change.³ Important public buildings decay, are repaired or not; a fortunate few are restored or adapted to new uses. Paintings darken with age, are damaged, remounted, repaired. Their earlier versions may be revealed by X-radiography and other techniques. Their identity is thus never fixed, just as Hardy's younger self both is and is not him, now, in the moment of writing the poem. Tangible and intangible works share this fate. Performance art, oral literature, dance, and drama have especially fluid identities and yet may be apprehended as the same work. These conclusions are what I now wish to tease out. They are what link conservation, curation, and scholarly editing.

I invite you to observe the naive or first-time editor at work. Let us say that the editor is male. He is editing a play of Shakespeare's. He finds the first textual difference between two copies of the same early edition. And then he finds differences between this edition and another early edition. He is aware that his publisher requires him to come up with a single reading text, not multiple ones. Let us assume that he, as an experienced reader and a good literary critic, prefers one variant reading to the other because, say, it nicely completes the line as a perfect iambic pentameter. He accepts the missing syllable into his reading text and the line now scans. He has judged the textual variants aesthetically, according to poetic form. So far, so good.

His problem starts, however, when he strikes the second one, and then the third, until, somewhat aghast at the Pandora's box he has opened, he finds there are some hundreds of them. Will his aesthetic sense that he has privileged in his first decision hold him in good stead throughout? Unless he is another Dr Johnson it will not.⁴ It is not *his* taste that readers have come to the edition to engage with. So he will soon be slipping and sliding as

he tries to justify accepting this variant reading from the other edition but not those other few on the same page.

To avoid this fate he brings bibliographic method to bear. He engages in very close study of these early seventeenth-century editions. What is odd about the typesetting? Why is it cramped here but loose there? Why is the same word spelled in different ways? Why, in these early editions, do some characters exit the stage before they have made their entrance? Because Shakespeare's original manuscripts no longer exist, our editor tries to detect the habits of spelling of the individual typesetters in this period before English spelling had become regular. To the extent that he can do it, he may be able to discount those habits so as to reveal the original features of Shakespeare's lost manuscript.

Our editor still has to assess the larger changes in wording among the early editions and extant copies. In doing so, he appeals continually to the evidence their variant versions reveal of how they were transmitted from manuscript to stage to print and which parties may have affected this passage. By these means and others, bibliography and stage history rationally limit his aesthetic preferences. But he is in no doubt about his aim, which is to approximate as nearly as he can the state of the text as it left the author's hands. Therein lies its authenticity and thus, for him, its identity.

The methodology and the nascent theory that I have been describing correspond to the situation up until the 1980s. A single reading text that would most truly present the work was the assumed requirement. Publishers wanted it, general readers wanted it, and stage directors and interpreting literary critics wanted it so they could get on with their different jobs more confidently. The work was assumed to be an ideal object hovering behind the early editions. Its text could, in theory at least, be approximated more closely and reliably than before because of the more or less scientific bibliographic methods brought to bear on revealing and analysing the textual variation.

But then in the 1980s the tide shifted, not just in editorial theory but in musicology, archaeological theory, and ultimately in building and fine-art conservation. Was it obvious any longer that, say, faced with the ruin of a magnificent building like the Parthenon, one would automatically aim, if one were given the chance, to restore it to its original form as best one could? What of its two-and-a-half thousand years of worship, adaptation, military occupation, and other changes since? Was the evidence of those moments to be automatically effaced in favour of the original moment? In the literary sphere, was it obvious any longer that the Shakespeare editor should efface, rather than preserve, the evidence of those stage practices that had likely led to alteration in the lost manuscript sources of the widely variant early editions? And why exactly was Shakespeare-as-author the authenticating source rather than contemporaneous stage practice itself? His so-called 'bad' quartos, thought by previous editors to have been cobbled together for sale by actors anxious to make a few shillings, had been treated with suspicion as likely to be confusing and misleading. But if these memorial reconstructions were closer to the stagings that the actors had actually appeared in, were they not a better report of that stage practice?

This summary shows that the source of authenticity that the editor or conservator might appeal to in making decisions was shifting. So was the nature of the work's identity, which was no longer considered a reflection of some ideal. This was inevitable once the audience or the readership or the viewership was found to be not just relevant to, but actually constitutive of, the work. The Rembrandt painting or the Greek vase or the Shakespeare play was not identical with the object on the wall, or in the museum, or on stage, or as reported in this copy of Shakespeare's First Folio. Rather there was, in each case as well, a transaction, some interaction on the part of the viewer or reader. That involvement formed part of the life of the work across time. This was additional to the work's history of early composition or design or making, its revision and production, and

then its history of editing or conservation, all of which interventions formed part of, as they also informed, that reception history. Works were always already in process. To think of them as static products was to misrepresent their conditioned existence. That, in summary, was the breakthrough that we saw amongst the theorists and the more radical practitioners in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The new realisation, ironically enough, echoed John Ruskin's in 1849. He had railed against the nineteenth-century vogue of restoring the medieval churches in England:

[T]he word restoration ... means the most total destruction which a building can suffer ... a destruction with false description of the thing destroyed [i.e., that it is literally a restoration].... [I]t is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture.... [T]hat spirit which is

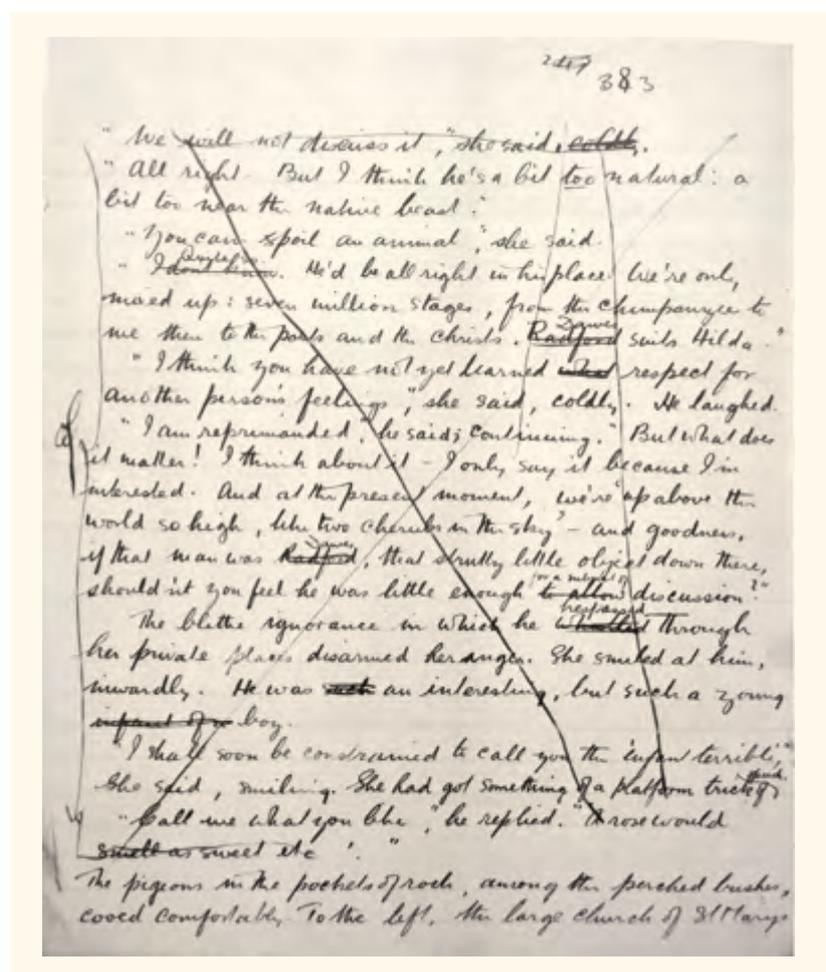
given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled.... Do not then let us talk of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end.⁵

Of the buildings, he went on to declare: 'We have no right whatever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead still have their right in them.' The walls 'that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity' only gradually acquire their living value—what he called 'that golden stain of time'.⁶

To think of the building or monument as a work unfolding over time rather than a static three-dimensional object is to recognise that its meanings are not fully determined in advance by builder or architect. They are also assigned by those who come into contact with the object.

► **Fig 4.** One of the deletions made by Edward Garnett to the manuscript of *Sons and Lovers*, with some earlier changes made by Lawrence also visible.

FROM D.H. LAWRENCE, *SONS AND LOVERS: A FACSIMILE OF THE MANUSCRIPT*, ED. BY MARK SCHORER (BERKELEY: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1977).



Conservators' new acceptance of the authority of history casts further doubt over the old aesthetic ground for decision-making and the longstanding assumption about the objectivity of the work. These two bedfellows, long in uneasy alliance with one another, were now granted their divorce.

But there remained—there remains—a problem. If the grounds of identity of works are expanded, if every stage of a work's history is to be valued, if every generation's rights in the work are to be respected, if every adaptation of it serves as historical evidence of that work-in-process, then what ground does the editor-conservator now have for changing anything? A hundred years after the restorations Ruskin was protesting against, and that Hardy was also unhappy with, Victorian additions to the medieval churches now take their place in the long history of adaptation of those same buildings. At the time, they necessitated a destructive intervention in the building's history, but who would remove them now?

So also in literary studies. Scholarly editors realised that, for instance, the version of D. H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* that nearly everyone from the 1960s until the 1980s read at school or university was actually an abridgement by a gifted publisher's editor, Edward Garnett. The young Lawrence, grateful the abridgement had been done for him so that the novel could be published and he could be paid, revised the proofs of the abridgement. Generations of readers who had engaged with the novel had their right in the abridgement that they had read, and legions of literary critics wrote impressive and sensitised essays on the abridgement, assuming it to be the whole thing. Yet surely there should be grounds for restoring the version he originally wrote, for insisting on its primacy?⁷

Therein lay the new dilemma, which is still with us today. What firm ground can editors or conservators appeal to, if they believe in their heart of hearts that this thing needs altering? In their decision-making they do not want to be convicted of inconsistency. If they flip-flop as they make their hundreds of decisions about the words and punctuation of the new reading text or about cleaning these passages but not

those in a darkened or damaged painting, their readers and viewers will be ill served since they will not know how to read what the editors and conservators have done. The edition-as-work or the object-as-work will have become illegible. A more general model of the work is clearly needed, one that will acknowledge what has been learnt since the 1980s and that will, coherently, offer scope and justification for what conservators and editors feel the need to do now.

To achieve this, we first need to distinguish, more firmly than the old idealist and objectivist assumptions required us to do, between the material form and the meanings it acquires—in the literary context, between the dimensions of document and text. They are forever locked together: each needs the other to secure its linked but different identity. There can be no text without document, but paper and ink do not become, for readers, a document until they begin to raise meaning from it. Once the meanings (the textual dimension) are acknowledged as relevant to the editorial purview, then the reader who realises those meanings becomes unavoidably part of the equation.

In this process of becoming, the edition runs parallel to conservation and curation. Understood as a single continuous activity, the edition's contents (reading text, apparatus, textual essay, and commentary and explanatory notes) document and support one another. In effect, they argue one another's case. Together they present the work to the reader. Curation and conservation are less intertwined. Their disciplinary bases are different and there can be tensions between the two; but the two fields are not completely separable in practice. This is because they must address one another's findings to ascertain the viable argument (object and interpretation) that the exhibition presents to the visitor. The legibility of the object-as-work depends on this successful act of communication, this transaction, with the viewer. Because the work is completed, is realised, in the act of viewing, the conservation cannot be considered only as an act of homage to its maker, or as being in the service of some transcendent ideal conception of the object.

Neither conservation nor curation can work in ignorance of this fact. Although object-directed in its methodologies, conservation is ultimately in the service of the object's viewership, both present and future. Curation draws out the object's meanings, in display texts and catalogues, by bringing to bear those contexts of interpretation currently deemed appropriate. Curation articulates the conservation. Together they present the work in its newly conserved state. The conditions of doing so are enabled but also constrained by available resources and current understandings. Thus the act of presenting the work implicitly envisages future, different arguments: new states of the work yet to come.

I am now using the term 'work' where 'object' might have been expected. This is because it is the work-model that matters here. In my own field I have come to think of scholarly editions as embodied arguments about the constitution of the literary work. That is to say, editions are arguments in respect of something (typically original manuscripts or early editions carrying versions of the work) aimed at some contemporary audience. A new or altered material object is created—the new edition—and it takes up its place in the long history of the work. The new edition, aimed at an audience, enables the work to proceed into future decades—only, editors hope, in a better-informed way than before. The peculiar privilege and responsibility that editors and conservators share is to influence the terms of that transaction both through alteration and through curatorial or editorial explanation. Based on thorough research, a new edition or a new conservation procedure brings new information from the work's history to bear. The conservator or editor proposes and then embodies a new state of the work. The proposed argument must be able to withstand the usually disciplinary tests, with their many sharp edges. Reviewers and commentators soon tell us if we get it wrong.

When the conservator alters the fine-arts or decorative object, the alteration may not be fully reversible, even if that is the hope. Historic-building conservation is always in that predicament since the safety and other

needs of modern visitors have to be literally built into the conservation. Adjustments may be made later, but there is no going back to a moment that has passed. I think of these forms of conservation as more heroic than mine. As a scholarly editor, I aim to alter, for the better, the terms and conditions under which the literary work is encountered: I aim to extend its fruitful life by so doing. I do this in the knowledge that, whatever the shortcomings of my edition, at least I will not have altered the original manuscripts, typescripts, proofs, or early rare editions upon which I draw. This distinction between conservation and scholarly editing must be acknowledged of course; but it does not alter the fundamental parallel between them. They share a need for a model of the work to which both may appeal in justifying their interventions into its material condition or linguistic text. That model needs to acknowledge the ongoing life of the work, which in turn requires an acknowledgement of the role of readers and viewers—even passersby, as Ruskin says—in it. They realise—that is, they make real—the meanings of the work; and those realisations shift over time.

This awareness of meaning-making is, to invoke Hardy's poem, their moment of self-unseeing now seen. Participating in the work in this way as an active agent, rather than imagining themselves as enjoying an Olympian view above it, editors and conservators take on an ethical obligation to explain what they have done, to leave the viewer or reader in no doubt that what they now offer or present is not the so-called 'work itself'. But the work in its newly conserved state or edited version, understood as such, can and does emerge in a way that can be defended. Professional intervention to create it therefore must be recognisable via one means or another if viewers or readers are to understand what they are looking at or reading and where they now stand in relation to it.

Thus the conservation or the edition will never escape the contexts of its performance or of the capacities of the performer. They will forever inflect the meanings the material object or document acquires through our interventions. We should not despair at this conclusion. Works have lives: all being well,

those lives are the conserved object's passport into the future and they are ours into the past. That passport is not a constant, for works do not stand still. In his own way Hardy registered this over a hundred years ago and in the simplest and most telling of ways. He embraced the discomforting paradox with which we still struggle today. ¶

This article first appeared, in a longer form, as 'The Present, the Past, and the Material Object', in *The Explicit Material: Inquiries on the Intersection of Curatorial and Conservation Cultures*, ed. by Hanna B. Hölling, Francesca G. Bower and Katharina Ammann (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 64–79. It was originally given as a paper at Bard Graduate College for the Decorative Arts, New York, on 31 March 2015.



PAUL EGGERT is a scholarly editor, book historian and theorist of the editorial act. His latest monograph is *The Work and the Reader in Literary Studies: Scholarly Editing and Book History* (Cambridge UP, 2019). It followed *Biography of a Book: Henry Lawson's 'While the Billy Boils'* (Sydney UP and PennState UP, 2013), and the book he is best known for, *Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture and Literature* (Cambridge UP, 2009). He was general editor of the Academy Editions of Australian Literature (a project of the Australian Academy of the Humanities). He is now Professor Emeritus at Loyola University Chicago and the University of New South Wales.

1. For a more extended account of parallels between the conservation of artworks and historic buildings, and the editing of literary works, see Paul Eggert, *Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For a similar approach as applied to music, see Paul Eggert, *The Work and the Reader in Literary Studies: Scholarly Editing and Book History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), chapter 2.
2. *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Samuel Hynes, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982–1995), i, 206. The original publication was in Hardy's 1902 collection, *Poems of the Past and the Present*.
3. Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built* (New York and London: Viking Press, 1994).
4. Samuel Johnson (and George Steevens) famously edited the works of Shakespeare in 1765.
5. John Ruskin, 'The Lamp of Memory', in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: George Allen and Sons, 1911), pp. 353–55. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was first published in 1849 with a second edition in 1880.
6. Ruskin, pp. 358, 339, 340.
7. For one solution see D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*, ed. by Helen Baron and Carl Baron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of D.H. Lawrence*. The editors return to the longer version for their copy-text but incorporate into it Lawrence's revisions of the abridgement's proofs—a debatable approach.

Straying from Myth

MARIAN MAGUIRE

LET ME BEGIN BY SAYING that I am best known for three sets of prints that combine New Zealand colonial history with Ancient Greek vase painting: *The Odyssey of Captain Cook* (2005), *The Labours of Herakles* (2008) and *Titokowaru's Dilemma* (2011). When asked to speak about my work I almost always start with *Ko wai koe?* (fig. 1), a lithograph from the *Cook* series, and that was my starting place when I gave the 2020 Trendall Lecture of which this article is a later, written up version.

Explaining *Ko wai koe?* isn't straightforward. It was first exhibited in 2005 but came to me many years earlier while making *Southern Myths* (2002), a series of etchings in which I set an adapted plotline from the *Iliad* in the South Island of New Zealand. I had been

wrestling with whether one could import myth into a land already replete with myth. Can land hold multiple stories or does one displace another? The image doesn't answer this question but it does reflect my conundrum. A related question was: If the Greeks arrived in New Zealand, how did they get here? Captain Cook brought them, I decided. Neo-classicism was in vogue in the late eighteenth century and Ancient Greece had been claimed as the birthplace of European civilisation. It made sense to me that the Greeks might travel as cultural baggage aboard the *Endeavour*. This became the starting point for the series *The Odyssey of Captain Cook*.

A year or more passed before I drew the two facing heads on lithographic stone, thus making the impression in my imagination actual. The Māori head on the left is copied from a French lithograph of a man named Natai. The original drawing was made during the voyage of the *Astrolabe* of 1826–29. On return to France it was redrawn onto lithographic stone then printed. There is no logical sense in using a French source when the overarching series relates to the voyages of Captain Cook, some sixty years earlier. I didn't so much choose the image as seek out a memory. Natai's profile was lodged in my internal image bank and from there it jumped into the initial inspiration. I can see why. It's the naturalism. I could feel his

▼ Fig 1. Marian Maguire, 'Ko wai koe? (who are you?)', lithograph, 2003, 510 x 700mm

IMAGE: MARIAN MAGUIRE

Background: Detail taken from fig. 2, p. 69.





skin, touch that thick mop of hair, imagine his eyes moving, his lips speaking. For me he was a real person not a representative of type. This is in contrast to the stylised Greek on the right. I drew him as a stock figure inspired by Greek vase painting but derived from no particular vase. A warrior. Masked by his helmet, depersonalised, a stranger. Both Māori and Greek carry a spiral; one tattooed into skin, the other decorating bronze.

I didn't settle on the title until three years after conceiving the image and it is no surprise that the title forms a question. Who are you? My initial idea was that the Māori man was asking this of the Greek stranger. But curiosity runs both ways. Over the years *Ko wai koe?* has been repeatedly exhibited and I have come to feel that the question is being asked of the viewer—'Who are you? Who are you all?' But lately that has been changing. Now, more often than not, I ask *myself* the question: 'Who am I?'

I am a Pākehā New Zealander, descendant on my mother's side from nineteenth-century arrivals. My father came from England after the Second World War. I was born in Christchurch, raised Catholic and carry an Irish name. Our large family were like migrants in our suburb; we had no blood relatives nearby. My mother is a North Islander and my father sailed from

bombed-out Manchester in the hope of a fresh start. Despite this sense of migrancy I feel very connected to where I live. The South Island, Te Waipounamu, has been my home my whole life. I tell you this because it is part of Māori protocol to declare one's lineage, affiliations and homeplace before naming oneself or entering a discussion. In this way listeners may know where loyalties lie.

During his first exploration of the South Pacific, Captain Cook was advantaged by having Tupaia aboard the *Endeavour*. Tupaia joined following the sojourn in Tahiti where Cook had observed the Transit of Venus. Tahiti was then called the Society Islands, as it was a hospitable refuelling stop for British and French ships. Tupaia was a Ra'iātean priest and navigator who coached Cook on the correct way to make approach within Polynesia. In the engravings of the period we see Captain Cook arriving on freshly discovered lands accompanied in the longboat by sailors and/or armed soldiers. The sailing ship at anchor in the distance is often pictured blasting cannon in a show of power. Though omitted from these scenes, Tupaia was there as well. And for me he still is, implied in Cook's knowing to carry a palm frond when greeting strangers on their own turf.

▲ Fig 2. Marian Maguire, 'Captain Cook makes his Approach from the West', lithograph, 2005, 365 x 600mm
IMAGE: MARIAN MAGUIRE

In my 2005 lithograph *Captain Cook makes his Approach from the West* (fig. 2) Cook is again about to step onto the beach, frond in hand signifying peaceful intent. This time he is without oarsmen or armed soldiers. The longboat holds another vessel; an oversize amphora picturing two warriors in contest. The *Endeavour* in the background blasts cannon in support. Despite this, Cook is disadvantaged. He brings the West with him but makes his approach from the right and, in European pictorial terms, entering a picture from the right is like walking into a strong headwind. On the left side of the picture, the protagonist's side, a Māori chief calmly stands. He wears a dogskin cloak and is armed with mere and tewhatewha. He is tangata whenua, a person of the land, and has turangawaewae, a place to stand. Cook, in making his approach from the right, must ask permission.

I copied the Māori chief from a drawing made by Sydney Parkinson. Parkinson was known to have a copy of Homer's *Iliad* with him aboard the *Endeavour*. I imagine him reading by lantern light of Agamemnon, Achilles and Hector while the ship rocks and creaks, then by day recording the plants, animals and people of exotic lands.

Memory is a vessel just as a boat is. Humans carry ancestral stories wherever they go. To live

without stories strips us of our cultural roots, deprives us of example, makes us lesser human beings. Myths guide through metaphor. I have come to the conclusion that living without myth is impoverishing.

Stories change over time. They are affected by the roll of events and changing environments; but the tracery is still there. My guess is that those stories that don't adapt lose relevance and are forgotten. Perhaps there are forgotten stories which could guide us now, as we face a pandemic? It would not be possible for humanity to remember hundreds, if not thousands, of generations of stories. Like emigration, storytelling involves packing. Some stories we take with us, others we leave behind.

While *The Odyssey of Captain Cook* was about first meeting, *The Labours of Herakles* was about the colonial push. For, having found New Zealand, the ancient Greeks desired to colonise it. It was the pattern of millennia. Who better to do that job than Herakles; my stand-in for the British settler?

One of the first lithographs was *Herakles signs the Treaty of Waitangi* (fig. 3), the founding document of our nation. Queen Victoria backs a lion-skin-clad Herakles while the Union Jack flaps above. They are on the left. The pictorial flow is with them. The Māori chief in the dogskin cloak, supported by carved ancestors,

► Fig 3. Marian Maguire, 'Herakles signs the Treaty of Waitangi'. lithograph, 2006/7, 394 x 614mm

IMAGE: MARIAN MAGUIRE



is now pushed to the right; the receiving end of the picture. The Treaty *will* be signed, colonisation is coming. In other lithographs Herakles proceeds to survey the land, clear it, establish farming, introduce plants and animals. He meets the neighbours and fights them. He exploits whatever resources he finds. I remember, during the lecture, saying: 'Don't be a Herakles.' I think of the word 'herakles' as more of a verb than a noun. For without action, what is he?

Herakles was no thinker. He achieved his objectives but did not set them. It was King Eurystheus who directed his initial twelve labours and his continuing exploits were at the behest of others. It was not in his nature to consider the wisdom of what he was doing; success was his goal, strength and perseverance his attributes. There is virtue in determination but Herakles' drive was excessive; he was unstoppable. He could not see the wood for the trees and look what happened to the trees. Being good at doing something is not the same thing as it being a good thing to do.

My protagonist in *The Labours of Herakles* sometimes failed. At times he was despondent or lonely or on the back foot. He doubted. And this reflects settler experience. Within accounts and letters one finds sadness at the disappearance of the forest and birdsong. Or recognition that land sales were shonky and that Māori in the neighbouring village were being disenfranchised. For most settlers, however, returning to England simply wasn't an option, so neither was giving up. In any case, there existed an underlying conviction that the spread of European civilisation was a good thing, bringing the benefits of Christianity, technology and the rule of law to 'savage races' who would thus emerge from darkness to light. Mythical Herakles succeeded through strength and determination. Settlers succeeded through shared vision and force of numbers.

The machinery of colonisation is huge. What colonists wanted was: the arable land, British-style government with the associated rule of law. In fairly quick time, and in contravention to the Treaty of Waitangi, these were largely achieved. The Treaty had, in its Māori translation, guaranteed Māori sovereignty—

tino rangatiratanga—but this was never honoured by the Crown. Although they were now British subjects, the rule of law offered little protection, indeed laws were frequently manipulated to wrest land and rights from them. When territory could not be acquired legally, other means were found. The above is a summary all New Zealanders are by now familiar with.

Shame, guilt, defensiveness: the reactions of descendants on both sides. For Pākehā, pride in our great-grandparents' well-intentioned exertions is now mixed with feelings of guilt. Māori struggled for more than a century to have the Treaty honoured but the system was stacked against them from the start. Fighting an unjust system must have been deeply fatiguing. Parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were repeatedly told to be quiet and get used to it, to give in. Generations of demoralisation, of being history's losers, take their toll and those victimised often feel shame. Shame and frustration can be inherited. Māori are frequently blamed for their current position. As soon as we start talking about blame, positions polarise. Defensiveness leads to closed ears. Without listening there can be no healing.

I wrote the phrase 'the machinery of colonisation is huge' in the present tense because colonisation is still in action. We see it in the felling of the Amazon, mining through fragile ecosystems, depriving orangutans of their habitat for palm oil, converting village-based diverse farming into genetically modified monocultures. I think of the people on the ground as the 'herakles': road workers, crane operators, miners, loggers, farm workers. Individually, as moral as the rest of us, most just trying to survive. Behind the 'herakles' are multi-national companies. Behind them are investors and consumers, the enablers who provide the means and the motive. We all know it. We need to touch the Earth more lightly. Consume mindfully and consume less.

I come back to the usefulness of myths and how they guide us. Ancient Herakles slew monsters and controlled wild animals, making land safe for human habitation. Through the Hellenistic period, his exploits spread



▲ Fig 4. Marian Maguire, 'Herakles surprised by Maoris who were driven off with Heavy Losses', lithograph, 2007, 405 x 580mm

IMAGE: MARIAN MAGUIRE

throughout the Mediterranean along with the Greek colonial push. Mythical Herakles has repeatedly provided a useful model when endurance brings rewards. Times have changed and the guidance we find in the Herakles myth must change with it. This doesn't make it irrelevant. We just need to learn something different from it.

I hit upon something early on: triangulation. Including three factors in the pictorial narrative keeps it flowing. What was a dialogue becomes a trialogue and the conversation has more movement. I've also come to realise that oppositional adjectives cause problems. Light/dark, good/bad, weak/strong, dominant/submissive, flourishing/declining, civilised/uncivilised can lead to simplistic thinking. For example: 'I am civilised, I am good, I am right. They are different from me, "other", therefore, they must be uncivilised, bad and wrong.' Though we know this to be faulty logic, thoughts such as these may still lurk in the subconscious. A sliding scale between two extremes doesn't always make sense either.

Using black-to-white as a metaphor, one could completely immerse oneself in shades of grey, totally fill one's vision with the luxury of infinite variation. In doing so one completely forgets colour. Or texture. Or wetness, dryness, heat, taste, smell, sound. Simplification may be satisfying but seldom reflects reality. History is not simple, many factors are at play, and often when I am reading I find myself thinking 'yes, but' or 'what about...?' Bringing the ancient Greeks into an imagined New Zealand cultural narrative was something I stumbled upon and I am lucky. My thoughts are slowed by the complication. For me, the ancient Greeks have been the lever that has kept the lid off quick conclusions.

Colonisation in New Zealand was ultimately driven through by force, yet I only referred to the Land Wars once in the *Labours of Herakles* series. My lithograph *Herakles surprised by Maoris who are driven off with Heavy Losses* (fig. 4) is based on a watercolour by Gustavus von Tempsky, a soldiering adventurer who died in 1867 at the battle of Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu

in South Taranaki. The Māori victory that day was remarkable. It was one of several led and won by Riwha Titokowaru, prophet and skilled military strategist from Ngāruahine (which during the nineteenth century was a sub-tribe of Ngāti Ruanui and has since become its own iwi.) By 1867, armed conflict had erupted through several tribal territories across the North Island. What drew me to Titokowaru was the tension between making peace and waging war. I called the series *Titokowaru's Dilemma*.

Some historical background. Following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, most Māori accepted the Pākehā newcomers. Many had adopted Christianity and were participating in the new economy. However, increasing pressure came upon them to sell land, whenua, the loss of which was costing them dearly. Apart from supplying the basics of life, the whenua connected them with their ancestors, their history, their roots. They felt themselves part of the whenua, integral to it. Māori identity was, and for many still is, tied to land. In 1858 the King Movement formed. It was a coalition of central North Island iwi who resolved to sell no more. With migrants arriving by the boatload, this was causing problems.

Migrants had been sold an idea. Expectant that an acreage would be forthcoming, would-be farmers milled frustratedly in the towns, on dwindling resources. Season followed season. The term 'land hunger' is repeatedly used during this period. Some gave up and went home and the whole colonial project appeared under threat. Settlers hadn't come all this way to live in a Māori land, something incomprehensible to them. Their aspiration was to build the Britain of the South, a recognisable version of Home.

I don't have room here to describe the lead-up to the Waikato Invasion and am mindful that in condensing history it is impossible not to create distortions. Brevity has its price. Nonetheless, I continue. In 1860 a massive British Imperial force was mobilised. Infantry advanced south from Auckland on a road built for the purpose. Navy, meantime, sailed heavily gunned warships up the Waikato River.

To get an impression of the scale, imagine Armstrong guns like those in the American Civil War being blasted at wooden pā, Māori fortifications. Imperial forces were victorious and, although the King Movement was not broken by this assault, Māori lost a great deal of territory. Large swathes of the arable land colonists had been after were confiscated.

The seaward land around Mount Taranaki formed part of the confiscations. Even at the time this was deemed illegal. Piece by piece the land was surveyed. In order to ready it for settlers, inhabitants were cleared off. This was done through 'bush scouring', which was understood by townsfolk as the rooting out of rebels in their forest strongholds. In reality it was systematic raiding of soft targets: villages were burnt, crops trampled, people killed. Starvation, illness and grief followed these raids, and with kin in neighbouring villages also affected, there was a limit to how much Māori could do to support each other. They were forced closer to the mountain and their situation was becoming increasingly untenable. I made a lithograph called *Cause and Effect* (fig. 5) that describes this but does scant justice to the injustice. There are four vase shapes. The top two show flip sides of a vase I called 'Neck Amphora by the Confiscation Painter, 1865-66'. On one side a settler family sit down to roast mutton in their newly built wooden house, through the window we view the lower slopes of Taranaki. On the reverse side soldiers on horseback trample Māori cultivations having triumphantly burned the village and chased off the people. Settlers get to eat because Māori go hungry. Below is another vase. This one I called 'Belly Amphora by the Provocation Painter, 1868-69' and here I come again to the battle at Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu and Titokowaru. He orchestrated his victory by provoking a fight on a prepared position. On one side of the vase I pictured a settler's house burned and a man killed. On the flip side, sirens, like those who lured Greek sailors to rocks and shipwreck, beckon colonial soldiers towards palisades and rifle pits. It is a trap. The sirens used song. Titokowaru used propaganda.

While researching towards *Titokowaru's Dilemma*, I looked for parallels in Homer's *Iliad*,

and found some, but to think seriously about war I needed a philosopher. Socrates has been my guide.

Socrates brought philosophy to the agora, the marketplace. Philosophy, the love of wisdom, was, he argued, for everyone. He would ask Athenians questions like ‘What is virtue?’, ‘What is justice?’ or ‘What is love?’

and they, assuming they knew the answer, started confidently but then struggled to form definitions that survived his further probing. Though ‘virtue’, ‘justice’ and ‘love’ are commonplace terms, central to the ethos of society, they aren’t easy to pin down. Socrates encouraged people to think harder, to question more and to discuss. ‘Virtue is knowledge’, he

► Fig 5. Marian Maguire, ‘Cause and Effect’ lithograph, 2010, 765 x 570mm
IMAGE: MARIAN MAGUIRE





is quoted as saying. I take that to mean the *pursuit* of knowledge, for he also tells us true wisdom involves recognising we may be wrong.

I think Socrates and Titokowaru would have enjoyed a conversation if they had had the opportunity. Titokowaru was not just a clever military strategist; he was a spiritual leader, a thoughtful man. Before making the decision to fight he hosted a series of hui, meetings, promoting peace and adaptation. He also led a peace hikoi, a march from Taranaki to Whanganui in an attempt to persuade other tribes to build a workable relationship with the settlers despite the pain of recent war and confiscation. Unfortunately, the bush scouring continued and survival was threatened. The decision to take up arms would not have been made lightly as there was much at stake. Titokowaru led Ngāti Ruanui and allies to several victories but ultimately they lost their war. Later, he and many of his followers joined

the passive resistance campaign at Parihaka, which was led by Te Whiti and Tohu, spiritual men who had always been devoted to pacifism. Passive resistance didn't work either. In fact, resistance of any kind proved unacceptable to colonial authorities. The peaceful, self-sufficient village of Parihaka was invaded in 1881. Its men were taken as prisoners and shipped to the South Island, where they were used as slave labourers. The women were raped. It is only in the last few years that this painful history has come more fully to the surface. Both sides had buried their shame.

One of the lithographs in the *Titokowaru's Dilemma* series is *Te Whiti and Titokowaru discuss the question, 'What is Peace?'* (fig. 6). Surely it is more than the absence of war.

It is impossible to work on a long-running series of projects about colonisation (it has been nearly twenty years now) and not be fundamentally challenged and changed. In 2018

▲ Fig 6. Marian Maguire, 'Titokowaru and Te Whiti discuss the question, 'What is Peace?', lithograph, 2010/11, 460 x 655mm

IMAGE: MARIAN MAGUIRE

I was honoured to be formally adopted by Ngāti Hāua hapu of Ngaruahinerangi, South Taranaki. This expands my loyalties and responsibilities. I didn't declare my adoption earlier when I wrote of my lineage and holding back in this way reminds me of Odysseus, the man of twists and turns, who didn't always reveal his identity. This takes me to deception, and I ask a question Socrates may have put if he were here: 'What is a Treaty?' Is it an agreement made in good faith that should be honoured? Or is it a wedge, a ruse, a way in, like Odysseus's wooden horse? My friends in Taranaki say the Treaty is a covenant, a promise yet to be fulfilled. It is a relationship that must be perpetually built and built over again. To me, this seems like wisdom.

I can't remember how I ended the Trendall Lecture but doubt it was with a conclusion. I've come to think of my images as steps on an ongoing journey. The lecture was a step on that path, this piece of writing, another. My thinking has developed along the way and I am glad of that. Surely the point of learning is to expand one's mind. I have decided to finish on a new quandary.

While writing, I have been reflecting on Captain Cook and his crew arriving on islands in the Pacific. They were compelled to approach inhabitants—strangers who spoke different languages and had different manners—and request from them food and water. This brought to mind Odysseus's voyaging. He likewise sought hospitality, *xenia*, without which he could not have survived. I've been thinking about greetings, first meetings and declarations of self. About what it means to be a resident or a visitor, host or guest. To be of-the-land or just passing through.

Many indigenous traditions claim Earth, Sea and Sky as ancestors. So too in the Māori creation story, where the union between the Sky Father Ranginui and the Earth Mother Papatūānuku brought forth life. The sea,

Tangaroa, is an uncle; also kin. Being revered ancestors, Rangi, Papa and Tangaroa are accorded the respect that befits their status.

This leads me to think about our relationship with the planet as we face climate change. Earth gives substance, air gives breath. The sea: a body of water. By giving and taking of its body through the weather cycle it waters our crops and sustains us; in our veins blood flows slightly salty. The relationship between earth, sea and sky is a dynamic one and provides us the environment in which we live. I wonder whether, fundamentally, deep in our subconscious, we see ourselves as people-of-the-land or as guests. If people-of-the-land, we would understand profoundly we are inseparable from the world in which we live. If we are guests, the question must be asked: Are we like the suitors who plagued Penelope as she awaited Odysseus's return—too many, too greedy and without shame? Or are we honourable guests, accepting Earth's bounteous hospitality and showing the respect our generous host deserves? ¶

This is a written up version of the 2020 Trendall Lecture which was given on 28 January at the 41st Australasian Society for Classical Studies at the University of Otago. As such it is not a transcript of the original lecture but rather a new version based on it. Anyone who attended the Lecture is asked to forgive omissions and diversions.



MARIAN MAGUIRE is a New Zealand artist best known for her lithographs and etchings which combine ancient Greek vase painting with New Zealand colonial history. Her print series have been exhibited widely throughout New Zealand and in the UK, Germany, Belgium and Australia. Her recent series, *Goddesses*, departs from the colonial theme. Alongside figurative imagery, Maguire has produced many exhibitions of abstract geometric paintings or invented plant drawings in which her interest in patterns, and the disruption of patterns, becomes evident.

HUMANITIES AUSTRALIA

