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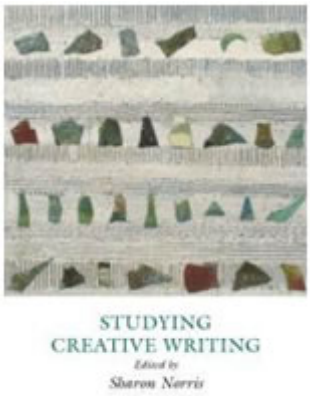
Reviews contents

TEXT review

Learning how to learn

review by Helen Gildfind



Studying Creative Writing
Sharon Norris (ed)
Creative Writing Studies, Suffolk UK 2013
ISBN 9781907076428
Hb 202pp AUD116.00

Studying Creative Writing is the fourth in an international series of books entitled *Creative Writing Studies*. It is aimed at prospective and current students and those who teach writing in higher education. The book is structured into eleven chapters, each authored by a different teacher-writer. At first glance, the title of this text makes it seem relevant to a very narrow audience. Upon reading, however, it becomes evident that the book is of interest and use to those studying, teaching, and/or practicing writing before, during or after tertiary education.

The book opens with Sharon Norris ostensibly discussing what students can expect of a creative writing degree. Norris' chapter, however, reads more as a defence of creative writing's relevance and worth 'in a time of uncertainty' (2). Whilst this is understandable – for writing is often dismissed as a 'soft' humanity with no clear career outcome – it seems unfortunate that such a positive book should start in this tone. Perhaps Norris' defence is aimed at prospective students who may struggle to justify their choice of study to themselves, peers and family. Perhaps it is aimed at competing disciplines that get more funding and respect in the current economic climate. Whatever the reason, the authors of this book can be confident that its substantial and diverse content shows what a valuable discipline creative writing is.

Readers will relate to different chapters in this book at different stages of their study or career: this is a good thing. Novices will appreciate Ally Chisolm's chapter on what students can expect from a degree in terms of skills and activities, and many writers will benefit from Lorna Fergusson's

discussion of when a student should partake in such uncensored activities as pre-writing. Her chapter explores how such things as free-writing, mind-mapping, listening, journaling and playing can help a writer identify projects and practices that are meaningful, substantial and sustainable (38). Fergusson offers strategies to combat pitfalls like procrastination: 'Writers are very talented when it comes to the art of displacement activity!' (53), and emphasises how pre-writing must always lead to commitment: 'Don't skip about the surface of things. There comes a time when you need to say, "This is the project I choose"' (54). Jennifer Young's chapter discusses the moment where the products of students' pre-writing are often tested for the first time: workshopping. This chapter explains the roles, expectations and courtesies of this most notorious, crucial and intimidating aspect of creative writing courses, showing how workshopping helps writers meet like-minded souls, whilst forcing them to produce and develop a good amount of work (69).

Spencer Jordan's chapter on editing and drafting, and Shawn Shiflett's chapter on the importance of reading, remind students that published works mask the 'agony' of redrafting that created them (Jordan 88). They note how a good author is a writer, reader, and editor all in one (88-90), and illustrate how careful reading teaches the novice that writing is the product of a creative process, not a divine act (36). Jordan advises on how to identify good readers for your work, how to use them proactively and what kinds of editing is required at different stages of a project, while Shifflet gives very detailed examples of how a reader-writer can analytically approach published texts as opportunities to learn the 'how' behind the 'what' of writing (22). Norris' second chapter in this collection looks at how reflective and reflexive activity is integral to the act of writing, requiring the writer to think about their work in relation to 'another' (including their self as 'other') and to thus be open to development and change (127). Nabila Jameel's chapter on performance calls all writers to recognise that 'writing is a business' and orders writers to be proactive in drawing attention to their work. This chapter shows how performance not only helps a writer expose their work, but gives them a chance to get feedback, thicken their skin, and enjoy the 'buzz' of connecting with readers (105). Curiously, Shiflett's chapter does not appear alongside these three chapters on reading, exposing and developing work. Instead, Shiflett's precedes Fergusson's chapter on pre-writing at the beginning of the book: this is an odd choice as novice writers are more likely to be already engaged in, and thus able to relate to, pre-writing activities rather than heavy literary analysis.

Helen Kidd, Elizabeth Reeder and Sally O'Reilly's chapters explore the nuts and bolts of creative writing as a degree course. Kidd's chapter on assessment is useful for those who have never studied at a tertiary level, and for those setting up courses of study for others. Reeder puts a positive spin on how computer technologies are an intrinsic part of higher education, arguing that net-based technologies force writers to express themselves clearly, be sensitive to readers and reading contexts, be economic with words and to write engagingly (84-86). O'Reilly's chapter completes the collection, discussing how students can lay the foundations of their careers whilst they study, and the longer terms issues of staying motivated, getting published and supporting writing financially.

Studying Creative Writing reveals the complexity, rigour and benefits of becoming a writer through higher education. This book shows how learning to read and write in a creative and critical manner, in a structured and supportive environment, not only develops professional writers, but

people who are not only multiskilled but have explored the fundamental questions of who they are and what they think about life (3). Whilst this book is clearly most relevant to teachers and current or future students of creative writing, practising writers may find it a useful resource at specific moments in their career or on a particular project. Despite its defensive opening, and despite how the chapters sometimes seem illogically ordered, this book offers a rich and varied introduction to what is a rich and varied field of study.

Helen Gildfind lives in Melbourne and has had short stories, book reviews, essays and poetry published in Australia and overseas. Her short story collection, Gently, Gently*, will be published by Spineless Wonders in 2015.*

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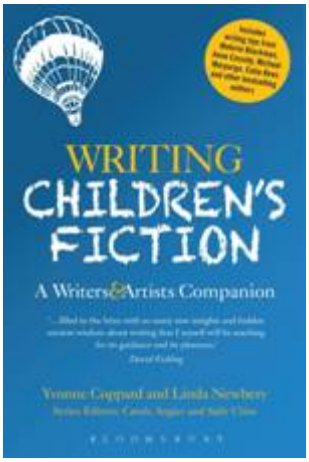
TEXT review

One for the kids (perhaps)…

review by Anthony Eaton



Writing Children's Fiction: A Writers' & Artists' Companion
Yvonne Coppard & Linda Newberry (eds)
Series Editors: Carole Angier & Sally Cline
Bloomsbury Academic, London & New York 2013
ISBN PB 9781408156872
EPUB 9781472535337
EPDF 9781472535320
Pb 246pp GBP14.99

Debates as to the role and nature of 'children's literature' have been batted back and forth in the academy for roughly three decades now. Since the 1984 publication of Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, Or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*,arguments about both the act of writing and publishing children's fiction, as well as the role that it should play in wider cultural discourse, have been grist to the mill of children's writers, publishers, and literary studies scholars within the academy. This book makes its own contribution to the ongoing conversation surrounding this often-contentious field of practice and scholarship, although it tends to take a reasonably conservative and, at times, reductionist approach to what is in reality an extremely broad area of creative and cultural practice.

The title proclaims it to be 'A Writers' & Artists' Companion', though much of the book – especially first, and final sections – would suggest that it has been more deliberately targeted at an unpublished readership seeking to break into the field of children's writing, rather than to an established practitioner. A good deal of the book is spent in providing advice on issues surrounding gaining representation, learning the field, and sourcing contact information within the industry. Much of this advice will be relevant only to writers seeking to establish themselves in the UK marketplace.

The first part of the book, 'Reflections on Writing Children's Fiction' is presented as something of a dialogue between the two editors of the volume – both of whom are well regarded, and well established children's

writers in their own right – and touches upon a few of the key debates and contested battlegrounds which regularly surface in discourse about children's writing. While useful as a broad overview of one possible approach to the costs and benefits of positioning oneself as a 'children's writer', this part of the book rather skims across the surface of the debates, as opposed to digging deep into them. There is a relatively unproblematised acceptance of the notion of a homogenous 'child' for whom all children's literature is written which seems to inform much of the thinking behind this section of the book, and several points (notably those dealing with issues surrounding the collapse of boundaries between children's/young adult/older reader literature) where complex debates are reduced to simple, binary, observations. In part, this is an unavoidable by-product of the unenviable task that the editors of this volume have been set; that effectively and simply elucidating the values and attitudes that inform an often highly-contested field of practice and study.

Part two of the book consists of 'Tips and Tales' from guest contributors – practising writers of children's and young adult fiction, each offering their own take on various ideas and issues surrounding the practice of writing 'for children'. In many ways this is the most dynamic and useful part of the book, as the wide variety of ideas and positions taken and presented gives some sense of the lurking complexity of the field. While this section is (like the book overall) predominately focused upon British writers and marketplaces, there is nevertheless an impressive array of children's and young adult luminaries who have been persuaded to contribute here; David Almond, Mallory Blackman, Anthony Browne, Michael Morpurgo, and Frank Cotterell-Boyce to name just a few. The common threads, as well as points of difference, that emerge from their short essays lend some sense of cohesion to the book overall, and some (notably Mal Peet's final couple of paragraphs) speak to a few of the debates skated over in part one of the book.

The third and final part of the book, 'writing workshop' purports to be a 'nuts and bolts' section, where the editors share '…All the practical advice and skill building accumulated in our writing and varied experience of teaching creative writing' (Introduction: p. xvi). This part of the book, while not offering anything particularly new in terms of methodological approaches to both teaching and thinking about creative writing, is useful to the extent that it contextualises such practices specifically against the field of writing for children. Like the previous section, it is particularly centred upon the practice of writing for children in a British context, and a number of the observations as to the commercial realities, the politics and the practicalities of children's writing, are not perhaps as relevant to an international readership.

Writing Children's Fiction: A Writers' & Artists' Companion might well be of use to a teacher seeking to engage students new to the field of children's or young adult writing, and to provide them with a broad overview of some of the issues at play. It would also be a useful addition to the library of anyone wishing to gain some perspective of the state of play in this field of writing in the United Kingdom. As a contribution to the scholarly discourse surrounding both the theory and practice of children's writing, it doesn't manage to fully engage with the complex and contested areas of debate, and as a creative writing textbook it offers some accessible perspectives, and ideas which may be of use to an early career writer or student of the field.

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TEXT review

‘An irregular book’

review by Jen Webb

Elizabeth MacFarlane
Reading Coetzee
Editions Rodopi BV, Amsterdam & New York 2013
ISBN 9789042037014
Pb 191pp AUD64.75

This is the book I’ve been waiting for: one that takes a complex, mixed-up mode of writing – what is often called fictocriticism – and does something genuinely fresh with it. It is not a mode I love, generally, the interweaving of fiction and criticism often seeming to my eye rather laboured, rather contrived; but Elizabeth MacFarlane’s mix of critical and creative writing has captured me. Her prose is exemplary – poised, thoughtful and with felicity of expression – and her analysis is incisive, engaged and informed. She has selected a significant topic, Coetzee’s later works, and found a new angle on them; and the book performs its thesis rather than simply declaring it.

The thesis is the question of the value of literature; but it is no mere working-through of those theoretical positions most of us already know so well we could mutter them in our sleep. Rather, it is the creative application of ways of reading, writing, and thinking. MacFarlane’s work tells the story of the process of reading Coetzee (her own reading, and others’), and then exemplifies it in the form of her creative works that were informed or instigated by the critical work, producing what she calls, in the title of the first chapter, an ‘irregular’ book.

Irregular:

> (adj): contrary to rule or moral principle; abnormal uneven, disorderly, not inflected normally;
> (noun): not pertaining to regular army. (Turner 1987: 567)

Irregular: not 'different', but 'non-compliant'. Rejecting the 'laws of genre'; not conventionally balanced; not properly enlisted in the regular army of critical *or* creative writing. Because of these various refusals, it is a book that is thoroughly aligned with its subject: here is an author, writing about an author, both of whom mix up form and voice and content, author and protagonist and narrator, to achieve a complex patterning. Because of the (irregular) interleaving of essay, fiction and third-person autobiography, MacFarlane's work refuses to present its findings in what are so often the only alternatives: either mind numbingly obfuscatory text, or else postmodern playfulness. Here, instead, is literary criticism that reads like a narrative, and is a constant reminder that behind the voice of the text is a human being who is reading, thinking, questioning, deliberating, and conversing.

It is a text, that is, which uses not the active, nor the passive, but the middle voice. MacFarlane spends some time on this point, because though it is at the heart of much of Coetzee's writing, it is not well understood, or often met, in creative writing classes. Voice, in grammatical terms, is the relationship between the action of the verb and the participants. In English, the options are either that the subject performs the action of the verb (active voice), or receives the action of the verb (passive voice). Coetzee instead applies the middle voice, one that does not have a place in English, one that exists for most of us only in a shadowy, half-forgotten way. The subject of the middle voice is neither agent nor object precisely, but somewhere between, somewhere signaled by the reflexive pronoun.

Coetzee, drawing on Barthes' analysis, identifies what this means, for an author:

> To write (active) is to carry out the action without reference to the self, perhaps, though not necessarily, on behalf of someone else. To write (middle) is to carry out the action (or better, to do writing) with reference to the self… The field of writing, Barthes goes on to suggest, has today become nothing but writing itself, not as art for art's sake, but as the only space there is for the one who writes. (Coetzee 1984: 94)

This is the space Coetzee inhabits, and it is a space where MacFarlane too sets up shop. She observes, with no small curiosity, that Coetzee has a stable of women protagonists whose initials are E.C.: Elizabeth Curren, from *Age of Iron*, the eponymous Elizabeth Costello, and Elizabeth, Lady Chandos (both from *Elizabeth Costello*). MacFarlane's own initials fit this pattern – Elizabeth Catherine [MacFarlane]. As one who writes, Macfarlane finds a space in the middle ground, where she deploys the middle voice, exploring Coetzee's anti-argument and the matter of writing with reference to the self writing.

Reading Coetzee is manifestly grounded on a sustained and close reading of Coetzee's oeuvre – fiction, essay, and everything in between – and to this extent it is a valuable text for anyone interested in a critical engagement with the work of this difficult, barely categorisable author. But perhaps more importantly, it is also a meditation on the work of writing. MacFarlane not only addresses Coetzee's own expressedly painful process, but takes up the difficulties and struggles of writing as expressed by so many writers: sad Maurice Blanchot; Roland Barthes and his depiction of the labour of writing; Gilles Deleuze seeking out lines of flight; Jacques Derrida doggedly insisting on the struggle between law and

act. In this way, *Reading Coetzee* demonstrates the indeterminacy of writing or speaking, the impossibility of language, and it is thereby threaded through with wistfulness. If I cannot make meaning, why write at all? Or, as MacFarlane puts it, 'if all speaking falls short, then why all these words?' (38).

In the chapter titled 'The ethics of embodiment' there are hints of possible answers to these very valid questions. But no attempt is made to offer a final answer. All we are left with is the reminder that there is no certainly: we are always suspended between self and self, between self and other, between metaphor and analogy, reason and unreason. But in writing, and in reading, this poetic uncertainty allows points of ethical connection. In reading, we meet the fictional world,

> and answer to this world just as a real person in the real world might. We reread it, with the idea of embodiment lingering in our minds and discover: our imagined selves are also answering to an imagined world; it is unreasonable, it is just as real. (121)

The fictional world thereby lays down a path, or a possibility of paths, on which more writing, and more ethical practice, can proceed.

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Jen Webb is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice at the University of Canberra, and director of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research. Her current research includes two major projects – the first investigates the relationship between art and critical social moments; the other explores the relationship between creative practice and knowledge, focusing particularly on the role of poetry in generating thought and the possibility of 'knowing'.

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TEXT review

Heart of lightness

review by Amy Brown

Paul Williams
Cokraco
Lacuna, New South Wales 2013
ISBN 9781922198082
Pb 209pp AUD25.00

If *Heart of Darkness* weren't Conrad's work, but instead a jolly collaboration between JM Coetzee and P. G. Wodehouse, it might have resembled Paul Williams' latest novel, *Cokraco.* Part metafictional conceit, part romantic romp, all satire: *Cokraco* is as difficult to define as it is enjoyable to read.

Twenty-three-year-old Melbourne academic, Timothy Turner, has been offered a lecturing position in the English Department of the remote University of eSikamanga. Turner's PhD subject, Sizwe Bantu ('The Greatest African Writer of All Time') is rumoured to have a residence in eSikamanga, so in accepting the position Turner embarks upon a pilgrimage to find his idol.

On arrival, Turner is disappointed. One of his students carries a (fake) AK47, his colleague Mpofu's office has been set alight, and worst of all his (incidentally, lobotomised) Head of Department's bookshelves are 'plumped' with Bloom, Kristeva, Derrida et al. 'Be warned: this is the world of Literary Criticism, and these are Literary Critics' (13). Bantu defines 'KritiK' as 'a person who rubs his or her legs together to make a noise. . . Arch enemy of the writer' (13). Far from being in his element in 'Bantu Country', Turner senses something sinister. What happened to his predecessor, Dr Makaya? Why is no Bantu taught at the University? Why are his Honours students 'doing silly creative writing instead of studying real literature'?

Via a second-person present-tense narration, satirical footnotes and sporadic excerpts of Bantu's own work (scrupulously referenced in a fictional bibliography), Williams gives Turner a histrionic, yet surprisingly

engaging, internal monologue. As a character he is both ridiculous and sympathetic, no more so than when he unpacks his Bantu collection, including a 'large varnished rubber cockroach' in homage to Bantu's seminal 'cockroach stories'.

The subtitle of *Cokraco*, 'a novel in ten cockroaches', is an understatement. In addition to the cockroach species titling each of the ten chapters, the book is riddled with the motif. From the Coetzee epigraph, 'Storytelling . . . / more venerable than history, / as ancient as / the cockroach', to the infestation eating Turner's breakfast cereal, to Bantu's postcolonial poetry, 'I Yam the cockroach who everyone ignores' (18) and the students' adaptation of *The Tempest*, '*The Time Pest*', the insect is used at every angle.

As the Coetzee epigraph suggests, the cockroach becomes a metaphor for languages and narratives, particularly those from the English canon – enduring to the point of being pestilential, crawling uninvited into all manner of discourse, evolving in order to survive. Lines from other writers creep, cockroach-like, into Bantu's verse – more cento than plagiarism [1]. Williams emphasises the futility of attempting to maintain a discourse unsullied by influence.

The cockroaches are, of course, also colonists. In Bantu's 'Death of a Cockroach', his protagonist 'the Modern Afrikanist' is overrun by the creatures he had once admired and used in his paintings:

> There were too many of them, or maybe they had grown immune, adapting to their hostile environment, and they looked a new breed, a more determined wave of invaders who had strategised and schemed, and planned their campaign of defiance... He had plenty of material for his art now, and what's more, a crisis, a disruption to his art, which would itself make great art, but he needed time, reflection and distance in order to produce it. And of this he had none. (187)

It would not be giving too much away to reveal that the Modern Afrikanist, overcome by paranoia, sprays himself liberally with cockroach killer and meets a sticky end.

'Death of a Cockroach' is an example of Williams' adroit and playful use of metafiction; it is followed by a footnote declaring that Bantu's work derives from an "obscure" short story by Paul Williams. Narrator Turner goes on to interpret Williams' story. The earnestness of Turner's footnotes, one of many signs of his hopeless obsession with Bantu, is humorously convincing. Williams' satire of academia brings to mind Maria Takolander's 'Roānkin' stories that form the second part of her excellent collection, *The Double* (Takolander 2013). Where many of Takolander's narrators are pompous about their academic obsession, Williams' Turner is nearly defeated by his own.

I would like to explain in more detail Turner's epiphany in the final chapter, but am reluctant to spoil the surprise, for, while predominantly a satire aimed at creative writing academics, *Cokraco* also works as a madcap mystery. Deliberately hammy in places, Williams' pacing and description still manages to generate effective suspense – of the B-grade horror film variety. His taut and vivid descriptions of the South African setting add to the tension and eventual release.

When his Honours students ask him to play the white oppressor, Prospero, in their adaptation of *The Tempest*, Turner thinks:

> You are aware of the baggage you carry, that they carry: that this superficial friendliness is not real, that underneath this banter is a century of resentment against white men, of which you are one. You have to tread carefully. But your instinct is to say to hell with treading carefully. Culture is not god. Culture is a mould growing and feeding on people, a deceptive green furry substance. You believe that underneath all racial, gendered, cultural, religious and political impositions, there is a fundamental sameness, common ground and this is what you need to tap into here. (45)

Cokraco could be read as Williams' observation of the dictum: 'to hell with treading carefully'. While its cultural and linguistic political commentary is far from subtle, the execution of the satire is sure-footed. Williams' technical knack for humour gives his latest novel the potential to appeal beyond its obvious niche market of creative writing academia.

Notes

[1] A topical issue in Australian literature. See Justin Clemens' astute comments in *Overland* (Clemens 2013). return to text

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Dr Amy Brown is a New Zealand poet and novelist, who lives in Melbourne. In 2012, she completed her PhD at the University of Melbourne, where she now teaches creative writing. Her first book, The Propaganda Poster Girl, *was shortlisted for a New Zealand Book Award in 2009. Her latest book, a contemporary epic poem titled* The Odour of Sanctity *was published in 2013.*

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TEXT review

Diverse voices in celebration of poetry

review by Catherine Cole

Contemporary Asian Australian Poets
Adam Aitken, Kim Cheng Boey and Michelle Cahill (eds)
Puncher & Wattman Poetry, Glebe NSW 2013
ISBN 9781921450655
Pb 253pp AUD24.00

Australian poetry seems to be thriving at present with some wonderful recent publications from Giramondo, Hunter Publishers, Grand Parade Poets and journals such as *Mascara* to name just a few. The contemporary Australian poetry published within them reflects the country's diverse voices from the youthful to the not so young, the stylistically traditional to more post modern approaches. How timely, then, that Puncher and Wattman have published a collection representing the multiplicity and range of Australian poets from Asian Australian backgrounds.

Contemporary Asian Australian Poets is a rich collection. The thirty-seven poets represented within it are arranged alphabetically, the editors doing so, they note, to avoid constraining groupings or thematic limitations, identity or narrative politics. Such an arrangement works well. The collection features poets who 'are either first-generation migrants from Asia, or Australian-born poets who can trace their roots to Asia' (13). Thus, each poet and their poems are allowed to stand within the collection individually, rather than as a poet tethered to historical, cultural or geographical identity.

Each of the collection's three editors offers their own preface. In his, Adam Aitken explores what it means to be Asian/Australian, locating his response in ideas of transnationalism. Kim Cheng Boey addresses the 'weight' of migration on writers, especially the binaries of old homeland with adopted home, past with present, self with the 'other' that Asian Australians constantly negotiate. Michelle Cahill examines the feminist experience, drawing on the works of the anthology's seventeen women writers, the female body as represented by the body of old nations and new. The 'body' of texts within the anthology is examined as well and Cahill offers a potent message to the reader about to enter the book. She

writes: '(The) materiality of women's labour and the limitations of patriarchal spaces marginalize women within the body as a text, the text as a body, a space, of counteraction from which to translate the present and to mediate the past.' (29)

Each of these three short essay/introductions is a small, bright and significant work in its own right. Each raises questions of identity, power, loss, home and gender. As such, they give teachers in creative writing, literary studies, gender and post colonial studies points of reflection with which to enter and explore the poetry that follows.

So how best to review the poems themselves, varied as they are?

The collection's thirty-seven poets reflect the anthology's diversity. The poets' backgrounds map Australia's diasporic communities and multiculturalism and also the significant political shifts that have occurred due to post WW2 de-colonisation and war zones such as Korea and Vietnam, all shaping the landscape of Australian immigration. As significant markers of human movement and settlement in Australia, the poems take the reader into many different worlds, old and 'new', with Australia offering a site of hope and expectation for all the poets, but the poetry is diverse too, in its world view.

Much of the poetry is achingly good and is an important reminder of Australia's rich cultural mix. Many reflect on what it means to be an Australian born overseas or the child of parents or grandparents who made the decision to come here, often at great emotional or economic expense. These past lives flit backwards and forwards through the poems, like skittish ghosts, as ephemeral as old identities or homelands that no longer appear on maps. These lives fade and reappear in numerous guises as we see in Shen's 'Highlights' (The Migration Museum Adelaide):

> Mostly obvious –
> commemorative plates
> of Queen Victoria,
> grainy photos of refugees
> clutching all that embodied them,
> a wall of embroidered national flags,
> ploughs, tea chests, walking sticks and
> passports from many nations
> with faded names. (225)

The subject matter of the poems is diverse too, traversing continents, global in scope. Take Michelle Cahill's 'Swans' with its Asian/Australian/Scottish/Nordic connections, all of them linked to the bird which so often represents migration and escape:

> Here in Orkney, they time-share as winter voyagers
> undisciplined pacifists, neither sentinel nor apsara.
> A splash of colour on the bill is tarred as a birch leaf,
> refusing to fall. The eye keeps faithful to her sky gods
> knowing the powder of white water, the Nordic crags…
> (77)

or Jaya Savige's 'Circular Breathing' (for Samuel Wagan Watson) which like Shen's 'Highlights' above, conveys lost places, faded or scratched away:

> There's a man with dreadlocks playing the didgeridoo
> in the Piazza di Santa Maria, and everyone is listening.
> Kids sit by the fountain swapping smokes for laughs,
> tourists lick gelati as they pass illicit markets,
> belts, handbags, sunglasses, all made in _____
> the place scratched off. (220)

Omar Musa's 'Felda' speaks more directly of nostalgia and the awful impact of greed on a returned-to place:

> Green desert,
> perfect pattern of oil rich trees,
> minting money.
>
> My guts turn to ash.
>
> There was a jungle here once,
> fecund,
> loud with orangutan and sunbear,
> gibbon and bulbul.
> (174)

Australia is lucky to have these voices, although at times in the current debate about migration and refuge it would seem we have forgotten what riches have come from our migrant heritage. As well as the diversity and individuality of the poems there is a commonality between all of them, an assertive and deeply felt expression of what it means culturally and artistically to be an Asian-Australian. There is a kind of gallantry in these voices and approaches, a challenge to be who you wish to be in the rising conservatism of contemporary Australia. Poetry is what matters most they seem to say, and the words of a poet can convey what other forms of discourse or debate just can't match.

Contemporary Asian Australian Poets is a collection that offers hours of browsing, musing, pleasure. It is an important resource for Australian universities – and one which should find a home in every creative writing and poetry studies course. I commend the publisher, editors and the poets for an anthology which represents a major and timely addition to Australian poetry studies.

Catherine Cole is Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong. She has published novels, short stories, poetry and nonfiction.

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TEXT review

The energy of contemporary Chinese poetry

review by Tina Giannoukos

Breaking New Sky: Contemporary Poetry From China
Ouyang Yu (trans)
5 Islands Press, Parkville 2013
ISBN 9780734048240
Pb 92pp AUD25.95

Breaking New Sky: Contemporary Poetry From China features forty-five poets in translation whose poems attest to the notion that contemporary Chinese poetry overflows with energy.

Ouyang Yu, the prolific poet and translator, has chosen as well as translated the poems in *Breaking New Sky*. The collection includes poets born in the 1960s, 70s and 80s [1]. It draws a wide arc to include such poets as world-renowned Luo Fu, born in 1928, and the girl poet, Yue Xuan, born in 2002 [2]. The inclusion of Cheng Chou-yu's poem, 'A Mistake', first published in 1954, suggests a broad definition of the contemporary as encompassing the recent if distant past. Thirty-two of the forty-five poets are represented with only one poem, but the collection deepens its offerings by its inclusion of a greater number of poems by such poets as the woman poet, Lu Ye, represented with ten poems, and Geng Xiang, represented with four poems.

In the introduction, Ouyang Yu writes that 'many of the poets in this collection were born' in the 60s, 70s and 80s and that 'their poetry, like their age, is full of youthful energy, with an unstoppable yearning to tell each and every one of their own stories, in a distinct voice that hits hard, and sparkles with humour – a quality that has been long absent from Chinese poetry' (6). In De Er He's 'Death Like a Shy Doorframe', the humorous turns into the intimacy of filial pain:

> Death is like a shy doorframe
> All Mother ever did was put her hand on it for support
> briefly
> Before it, becoming lower and smaller

Turned into a photo frame –
In tight support of Mother (29)

Conversely, in Bai Helin's 'My Father's Fishbone', the humorous turns wry: 'But I, strangely, felt a loss, as if / This spring, hot and cold by turns, had played / Another joke on us, one that was no fun' (18). His absurdist irony in 'A Fake Rattan Chair' refigures itself by poem's end as an incongruous erotics imbued with nonchalant humour:

Now the fake rattan chair in a black-coated iron frame
Has retired before its time
Like a weary housekeeper. In it, there is a mess consisting
of
An old attaché case, four unwashed items of clothing, three
stacks
of trousers
Two mobile phones, a stack of poetry collections and a
copy of
The Golden Rose
As well as a white bra, just removed
From my girlfriend's breasts (16-17)

In Ouyang Yu's heterogeneous gathering of poems, it is the variety of voices sounding their individual depths that emerges as the collection's strength. He impresses upon the reader that he is presenting Australian lovers of poetry 'with an eclectic selection' of what he considers to be 'the most interesting, the most enticing, the most loveable poems, and the most controversial, at the hands of the best known and best unknown poets from an ancient *shiguo* (poetry nation), chosen over a period of a decade or so, purely out of a labour of love' (9). In 'On the Balcony', Lu Ye juxtaposes traditional with modern imagery to revitalise the lyric:

A house from whose balcony one case the Yangtze
Can be called a luxury residence even at its humblest
My windows all open towards June and the viscera of the
summer exposed
The summer in my body happens to be lush with water
grass
Open only for you (63)

Ouyang Yu's method of selection is to choose only poems that have affected him 'emotionally or cerebrally, without regard to name and status' (8). This renders *Breaking New Sky* a personal collection, a lyrical and intellectual response to the expression of the contemporary in individual poets. Ouyang Yu writes of having 'made many discoveries, Geng Xiang being one of them.' Born in the fifties, Xiang's four poem show him to be a poet of deep reflection and marvellous observation. In 'An Account of the City Wall', he writes: 'A black brick, laid in the most secretive spot / Of the brick wall, could radiate the irreversible power / Of heaven and earth' (30). Ouyang Yu is also bringing to us poems that we may otherwise not encounter in translation such as the anonymous poet's 'Paper Boats' which intrigues with its closing lines of 'who can prepare a harbour for me / one in which I will have no complaints?' (91) or Chen Ying's two poems, one of which, 'Blink', Ouyang Yu considers 'a gem that will remain shining even though this born-in-the-eighties boy may no longer wish to pursue a poetic career' (7). In 'The Sea Eels Hanging', the girl poet, Yue Xuan, shows an attention to the ecological:

The sea eels don't want to live
They hang on the wiring outside my window, in a row, collectively
The sight of the thick iron wiring
Puts one in despair (80)

Ouyang Yu gives an expansive picture of what makes contemporary Chinese poetry vibrate. Attuned to the quotidian as much as the lyrical, he conveys in particular, its energy. The contemporary emerges as a field of change and variety over several decades. The diversity of the collection suggests a renewal of the poetic element in Chinese poetry. The poems throughout *Breaking New Sky* are infused with the existential challenge of day-to-day life, its wryness and its lyricism. Yu suggests that the enduring quality of a poem 'is the unspeakable mysterious truth captured in the brevity of lines that transcends cultures and politics' (6). There are poems of meditative inquiry (Hu Xian's 'Shadow'), of ironic observation (Hou Ma's 'Silence'), and of unadorned lyricism (Chu Chen's 'Warnings Against My Own Insomnia'). Zang Di's 'The Philosophy Building' is a complex articulation of all three:

built in the 1940s, with a blue-grey roof
like a wing-room directly taken from a temple
its style certainly is not ordinary
beautiful because of dusk and disappearing because of the punctuation of stars (81)

The imagery throughout the collection is as various as the individual poet's inquiry. In 'Mother the Hardest to Describe', Bai Lianchun is attuned to change, the inorganic enmeshed with the organic: 'The earth is indescribable: even a fallen leaf is thickly covered with/ Seasons and roads' (19), while the caesura-like spacing of Wei Ke's 'Blue Poem' underscores a playful imagery:

A book of poems must have blue colours
Each poem a cloud in the sky
On the land ……those crop-growers
May occasionally watch for the scattered poems (75)

The individual voices of *Breaking New Sky* do not shy away from critique. In 'The Red Car', Long Quan brings moral pressure to bear on the contemporary:

Old Lin's daughter is pretty, capable
She is fetching bags, big and small, from the car
And she is taking out bundles of banknotes from her small bag
Old Lin, standing to the side
Is watching, not saying a word (51)

For his part, Qi Guo wryly refigures the contemporary in 'The Last Day' as an international rather than purely domestic problem:

On this day
There is no one in China
All gone overseas studying

On this day
There is no one in any country

All gone overseas (71)

A second strand in the contemporary foregrounds women's poetry. Ouyang Yu argues that the broader range of voices being heard in contemporary Chinese poetry 'is reflected in the rising power of women's poetry' (7). He writes that 'the poetry of Chinese women poets that I have encountered is more lyrical than political and that is where their power lies' (7). Lu Ye shows herself to be a masterful exponent of the lyrical. Her lyricism takes the form of the nostalgic in 'The Quilt', or the sensual in 'Taking a Nap'. Yet her 'B-Mode Ultrasound Report, Gynecology Department' raises the politics of language:

In a lyrical language, it would have to be written thus:
Ah, this cradle of mankind
Grown on the body of a failed woman (53)

Hong Ying deconstructs longing in 'The Sound of a *qin*': 'all i want is the black color of the whole world' (37). Mo Xiaoxie's 'We Don't Owe Each Other Anything Any More' undermines the lyrical: 'I am still alive / Although I have disappeared as if evaporated' (67). Shen Li's 'A Bit Like Love' deconstructs image-making in poetry even as she turns to the lyrical:

Those trees that came out of your eyes
Growing around me
Far and near
Are planted with my insipidness, and stillness (72)

Ouyang Yu reveals his skills as a poet-translator in *Breaking New Sky*. He views translation 'as a total project, requiring a multiplicity of approaches … chief among which is direct translation' (9) [3]. He suggests that direct translation 'results in poetry that fills the lacuna of a target language, in this case English, with something so quotidian in the source language, that one's sense is numbed, adding strangeness to the beauty of the translated poem' (9-10). There is creative logic in this. In using 'windscape' instead of 'landscape' in the woman poet, Zheng Xiaoqiong's poem, 'Late Night Train' (83), the translated poem sustains the effect of movement. Rather than an unfolding vista, we are inside the vista, a strangely beautiful effect: 'The fields, the lights, the stars that have fallen on the plain / Extending the windscape, night in the March of spring / Ah, so softly beautiful!' (83). Nevertheless, Ouyang Yu does not bind himself to one approach: he applies transliteration when direct translation fails. He retains the Chinese in the woman poet, Dai Wei's 'The *Dong Xiao* Flute', to invoke a different music altogether: 'The deepest well / is not as deep as a hole in a *Dong Xiao* flute' (28).

Ouyang Yu writes that 'I can't help but agree with the cliché that it takes a poet to translate poetry' (10). He argues that 'the poet-translator acts the multiple roles of a lyrical singer, a story-teller, and a poetic creator … always bearing in mind that creativity is the key in all of one's endeavours' (10). In *Breaking New Sky*, his lucid translations highlight the contemporary energy of the poems. Whether it is through their references or their unfolding, their playfulness is suggestive. He Xiaozu's unassuming reference to mah-jong in 'The Cat of 17 December' suggests the ironic: 'in such a weather, however / even the mah-jong players don't get in touch / making you feel a bit odd' (36). The woman poet Xiao Xiao's 'Winter' evokes the sublime: 'This winter, still and aloof / All the ice and snow has fallen on higher places / So white, and, oh, such

whiteness' (76). Ouyang Yu's translations of the woman poet Shu Ting's ironic 'Good Friends' and De Er He's surreal 'Death Like a Shy Doorframe' have previously appeared in *The Best Australian Poems 2012*.

In all, *Breaking New Sky* is an individual collection that suggests the vitality of contemporary Chinese poetry.

Notes

[1] Ouyang Yu is also a novelist. His novel, *The English Class*, won the Community Relations Commission Award in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards 2011. return to text

[2] Ouyang Yu writes that 'when one talks about Chinese poetry, one also has Taiwanese poets in mind, who also write in Mandarin' (8). return to text

[3] For an interesting account of the challenges of translating Australian poems into Chinese, see Ouyang Yu's article 'Book Without Bonking', *Griffith REVIEW* 18, (Summer 2007/8): 99-105. return to text

Tina Giannoukos is a poet, fiction writer and reviewer. Her first collection of poetry is In a Bigger City *(Five Islands Press, 2005). Her poetry is anthologised in* Southern Sun, Aegean Light:Poetry of Second-Generation Greek Australians *(Arcadia, 2011). She has a sonnet sequence in* Border-Crossings: Narrative and Demarcation in Postcolonial Literatures and Media *(Winter, 2012). A recipient of a Varuna Writers Fellowship, Giannoukos has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Melbourne and has read her poetry in Greece and China.*

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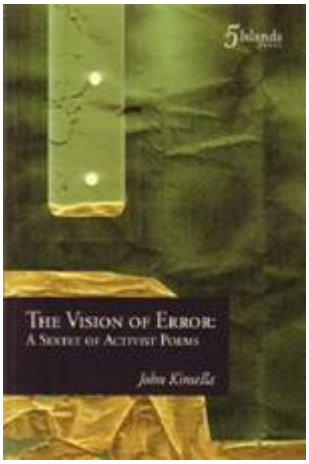
TEXT review

The academy applauds

review by Anthony Lawrence



John Kinsella
The Vision of Error: A Sextet of Activist Poems
Five Islands, Melbourne 2013
ISBN 9780734048691
Pb 126pp AUD25.95

John Kinsella's latest book of poems is a tough read. The syntax is gnarly and convoluted, and the tone ebbs and flows between muted outrage and cool commentary. Most poems feel forced, some disingenuous, and all have the weary touch of a disengaged observer who seems to fear emotional involvement. For a book of poems promoting itself as activism, it fails palpably. As a collection of poems driven to remind the reader, once again, that its author is a vegan anarchist pacifist who uses a manual typewriter, who suspects the lyric and who likes to showcase his knowledge of science, philosophy, popular music, poetics and whatever else he feels compelled to throw into the mix, it succeeds brilliantly.

To be an activist, indeed to engage with any form of protest, should involve clear, concise information. The purpose should be to reach out to as many (in this case readers) as possible, to make a case against property developers, shooters, salination, gun-control, the mining industry, plasma televisions, computers, capital punishment, land ownership, pesticides or herbicides – these things are mentioned, given a cursory glance. Yet much of this book seems so intent on gazing in on itself, always with one eye fixed on the academy, that activism gives way to a cloying, self-indulgence. Kinsella moves swiftly from observations of lizards, spiders, weather, owls, ants, foxes and pigs, to what he is looking at while sitting before a manual typewriter. There is no sense of urgency, no empathy, just a confused cobbling together of whatever happens to be at hand, at any time. Part eight of the opening section, 'Harsh Hakea (or Elements of the Subject's Will)', takes on pigs, a Dadaist sculptor, jury duty, a ubiquitous *red shed* and a direct, personal, platitudinous take on physical protest:

> Hans Arp, I can't worship you.
> Hans Arp, I won't worship you.
> Hans Arp, would you really expect me to? (16)

and

> ...I have seen pigs farrowing, and the shadows
> of piglet dropping on piglet, the kind of occlusion
> and sounds occlusion makes. (16)

and

> Sans jury duty, which won't do, no do, I don't do, do you?
>
> As relates to another personable.
>
> Duty is forsaken? (17)

This is followed closely (connected by Kinsella's need to inform us that 'Nothing here is perfectly circular') with a prescriptive, prosaic protest-list:

> I will learn to block out the assaults of scramble-bike riders
> I will learn to block out the gunshot that ravages animals and birds
> in the valley
> I will learn to block out the riproar of U-turning jets while their pilots
> ready for war. (17)

Apart from being overburdened by Kinsella's inability to resist showing off, it is bad writing. Examples of compelling rhythm, startling imagery, line-breaks that do justice to the tone and breath of a poem are sorely lacking in this collection, as they are in most of his books. It is as though he is happy enough to have crammed in as much information as possible, with a few connecting activist references, then walks away into the next project, hoping it all sticks. There is very little evidence of a poet in control of his material – Kinsella's lack of editorial proficiency is widely known among poets, and this book is a classic example of profligacy-before-quality.

The Vision of Error is a grab-bag of much of what Kinsella has been doing for many years: relying on his extensive knowledge of many things and shoehorning them into poems that too often read either as bad cut-up prose, or hastily-written lines that contain a ghost-print of eloquence or lyrical ability, but then don't achieve the sum of their potential parts. The poems in this book feel rushed. Packed into sections with clever titles, they don't cohere. Kinsella's 'Linguistic Disobedience' becomes a linguistic dumping-ground for ideas inside poems designed to impress a very small percentage of potential readers. That seems the antithesis of activism.

Charles Bernstein wrote:

> That the political value of poems resides in the concreteness of the experiences they make available is the reason for the resistance to any form of normative standardization in the ordering of words in the unit or the sequencing of these units, since determining the exact

> nature of each of these is what makes for the singularity of the text. (Bernstein 1984: 139)

John Kinsella's resistance to 'normative standardization in the ordering of words' is in evidence in many books, yet his resistance to clarity, when it is most needed, is disturbing. Kinsella has said that all poetry is political, yet too often his work is shackled by a refusal (inability?) to engage emotionally with his subject-matter, which gives the work a one-dimensional, didactic texture. If Kinsella believes that poetry is capable of, or has the potential to negotiate or arbitrate crisis, he should be inviting wide public involvement, not anticipating another nod from academe.

In part six of 'Hero', Kinsella quotes IA Richards' *Poetries and Sciences:*

> the business of the poet
> is to give order and coherence. (104)

It is a pity he couldn't take on that sage advice.

In 'First Essay on Linguistic Disobedience' (in *Peripheral Light* 2003), Kinsella wrote: 'I give this language nothing'. That sounds right on the money.

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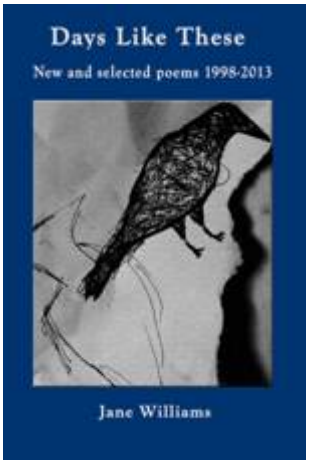
TEXT review

Williams' exploratory lyrics

review by Dan Disney



Jane Williams
Days Like These: New and selected poems 1998-2013
Interactive Publications, Brisbane 2013
ISBN-13 9781922120649
ISBN 9781922120656 (eBook)
Pb 126pp AUD25.00

Jane Williams' exploratory texts are testimonies: these elegies, odes, epistles, and exhortations work in quiet ways across vectors of identity, place, and memory. Williams persistently apprehends landscapes populated by protagonists who often seem to only half-belong but, nonetheless, 'know all the right moves' (38). The title of this *New and selected poems* announces a preoccupation both diurnal and otherwise: echoing Lennon's 'Nobody Told Me', Williams' complex snapshots tell of the poet-as-antagonist, a roving persona only sporadically in love with the real and often instead equally bemused and bewildered by many of the co-residents, many of whom find their way into her texts.

The first poem, 'Aesthetics', from the much awarded *Outside temple boundaries* (1998), immediately apprises humans behaving oddly. The wheelchair-bound subject is described as 'a glass slipper' among 'princesses' who, shopping at a market jewellery stall, remark:

> *look the stone in the ring*
> *matches the colour of her eyes* (3)

as if the subject is absent, an inanimate non-person. Williams has been shocked into italicising this moment of unintended dehumanisation, and so often her desire for things (and people) to be different pushes these poems into critique: often, the commentary is from a metaphysical angle. Thus in the texts from *Outside temple boundaries* there are allusions to the stations of the cross, Mary Magdalene (who euphemistically holds 'his man-ego like a chalice' before baptising him 'over/ and/ over/ with her scandalised mouth' [9]), angels, and martyrs; indeed, these early poems frame human

behaviors as imprinted with (and yet operating outside the confines of) religious containment. In 'Final Draft', Williams reimagines the creation of Eden, where a god asks:

> *tell me*
> *what do I look like?* (10)

but Eve has disappeared and Adam is missing; the snake is all smiles and, tellingly, "only the fog is real" (10).

This real fog in imaginary gardens (to turn Moore's credo) traces the discernible drifts of human behavior, a preoccupation which extends into Williams' next collections. In *The Last Tourist* (2006), a disembodied hand waves 'a welfare cheque/ like a warzone flag the other warming/ the handle of the getaway pram' (20); elsewhere, veins are concealed by a train station toilet's ultraviolet blue light, eking out 'like old disco' (22); in 'How the Heart Works', the poet wonders what would be the upshot if no distinction were made 'between the heart of a man/ or a pig or a lion' (24), the implication being that, sometimes, there is no difference. But it is in 'Tips for the last tourist' that an ethical centre to this *New and selected poems* is situated; inthe first of nine sections in the poem, Williams advises readers to:

> Recycle
> the tourist guide information pamphlet
> depicting tree fellers on a twenty pound note.
> Find out why the life of Trugannini
> wrongly named Tasmania's last Aboriginal)
> was tragic in any language. (30)

Here is a subtle critique of place, a place in which 'on a good day you are living in paradise' (31), and its peoples' well-intentioned wrong-headedness. Williams' attention then shifts to a tourist who has missed the last ferry from Bruny Island back to Hobart:

> Dream your ancestors at play with Trugannini –
> *truth dare double dare torture kiss or promise.*
> That the choices they make change everything. (32)

Cultural inheritances cannot be disinherited, and this poem is an echo sounder locating the contours of strangers 'in a strange land' (31). The poem, in other words, functions as a *cooee* to the colonisers.

More broadly, though, Williams tells us she is talking a 'universal language of the homesick' (40), and is nostalgic for a reality beyond the small affective explosions that punctuate her texts. Hers is a way of apprehending in which:

> truth blossoms
> in the absence of light
> and beauty is as vulnerable as a fontanel
> under the kiss of god. (42)

These post-Keatsian lyrics treat the poem as a depth test for reality, and are suffused with a spontaneous overflow (after Wordsworth) of powerful feelings. When Williams asks 'can a free spirit have roots?' (31), her books supply ample response: these poems can be said to be rooted in 'an unappeasable yearning for unattainable goals' (as academic Isaiah Berlin defines Romanticism), and this is an energy which sustains the poet.

Indeed, addressing a deceased brother, Williams candidly admits that, '(a)s you predicted my poems leave me with more questions/ than I start out with, which keeps me writing' (34).

And continue to write she does: in *Begging the Question* (2008), Williams makes appeal to our intuitions by reminding us, perhaps terrifyingly, that 'you are exactly who you think you are' (47). Part of her project seems a reorientation through purposeful disordering (after Rimbaud), in which 'I lose my sense of direction/ and have to play tourist to find my way home' (52). On the next page it is a sleeping body that 'is its own home' (53), in stark contrast to the 'drug induced sleepers (who) dream dreams they won't/ remember' (56). Increasingly, the sense is that Williams is at large within herself—a tourist who finds succor not in the world but, instead, accesses experience through poeticising reality-as-waking-dream. Apprehended thus, these poems are travelogues toward the ideal dwelling of reimagined places, where no one quite looks the part anymore. Williams is precisely in the business of problematising appearances; were she a poet from the Platonic Republic, she may have been marched out of town long ago. As it is, Williams performs the role of weird sister, impelled (after Stein's rose) to incantatorily remind us (and herself) that 'It's all good it's all good it's all good' (60).

City of Possibilities (2011) extends the instructional mode; 'On entering the city of possibilities', the imagined addressee is counselled to:

> Experiment with suspension of disbelief as if
> any city could be the city of possibilities.
> Don't forget to breathe. (67)

Here is a poet treating all cities (communities, cultures) as regulated with rules which, when defamiliarised and viewed from an outsider's perspective, seem breathtakingly strange, perhaps wondrous; in this poem Williams again situates her poetics:

> Turn your deep longing for something more into art,
> into the opposite of neutral territory (67)

as if the unappeasable yearning that impels these poems shifts us (after Aristotle) from particular to universal, resonant apprehensions of near-belonging. In proferring the poem as a dwelling, these texts each enact a homecoming, to psychic sites burnished by 'a light burning/ in the ruins.' (67)

Williams directs her gaze, often incredulously, toward the many who surround her: the unmoving sleeping bag 'behind the salvation army/ charity drop-box' (72) is tonally congruent with the man who cries 'over the fate of his girlfriend/ who only ever lifted credit cards/ from neglected handbags' (79); elsewhere, *'I had a spew and now I'm right'* (82). These are the personae that at once astonish and disrupt Williams: her random interactions leave her with more questions than answers, but also sustain that unquenchable desire to understand the real as weirdly-dreamed.

In the uncollected poems that complete this *New and selected poems,* Williams crystalises her critique as an extra-systemic mode; this is poet-as-silhouette, engaged and immersed and yet set apart and disconsolate with 'the kind of loneliness/ only company can evoke' (98). At heart, what these poems confess to yearn for is simple – an enduring connection:

Two right people finding each other
despite the hour, weather, karma.

Days of unanswerable light… (102)

These final poems shift ever inward, and ever toward affectivity. The settings, though, expand beyond an Australian context and the imaginary gardens are now sites of entry for Williams, who ranges from Russia to road kill, weddings to Ireland, google, *National Geographic*, adult children,Singapore, and beyond. Inside these lighter poems, there is a spirit still toiling within the deep longing of finding/making a home, though these final texts may trace a turn: here is a poet who has been only fitfully ardent within the spaces of confined experience, but who now perhaps finds herself on the cusp of new (and newly invigorated) exploration.

Dan Disney currently teaches in the English Literature Program at Sogang University (Seoul). His latest book, Mannequin's Guide to Utopias*, is published by ASM (Macao).*

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TEXT review

The pain and pleasure of a meal eaten alone

review by Jillian Adams

Dining Alone: Stories from the table for one
Barbara Santich (ed)
Wakefield Press, Kent Town 2013
ISBN 9781743052686
Pb 176pp AUD24.99

Barbara Santich is an internationally recognised culinary historian who holds an important place in the field of food studies in Australia. Santich has been teaching food writing at the University of Adelaide since 2007 and initiated its Graduate Program in Food Studies. She also teaches in the Graduate Certificate in Food Writing. The author of eight books on historical food traditions, Santich's earlier title, *Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage* (Santich 2012), tells a history of Australia and Australians through our changing food preferences. *Dining Alone*, by contrast, is a compilation of short stories, mostly on the theme of dining alone, written by Santich's food writing students between 2007 and 2013, as part of their overall assessment towards a Graduate Certificate in Food Writing at the University of Adelaide.

Food writers 'recognise the importance of communicating to readers the taste of a particular food or dish, whether in a restaurant review, a work of fiction or a journalistic article' (4). Santich's students were encouraged to taste a variety of foods and to find 'words to match the flavours and textures they were tasting' (4), and this is apparent in their stories. Tibbie Chiu describes in 'A date with destiny' a perfectly cooked cube of veal surrounded by a 'smoke haze smelling of pine forest' and, for dessert, 'a decadent climax of chocolate' (51). Lisa Dempster describes moussaka in 'From Mykonos to Meteora', as 'eggplant baked the colour of mince and thick layers of potato shiny with béchamel' (59), while Elizabeth Black's narrator in 'Under the sea' conveys an unsettling meal with her partner through the imagery of an angry sardine presented coiled with its tail … thrust into its mouth in a final act of aggression' (42).

Descriptions of food are memorable features of many classic novels – I can still see Emma's wedding feast in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and tables laden with cakes and ices in Giuseppe de Lampedusa's *The Leopard*. The food described and eaten in the stories in *Dining Alone* is as memorable, but tends to be peripheral to the narratives. The stories are about the occasion (or lack of it), and how each diner came to be dining alone. I took comfort that, like me, for whatever reason, these diners feel a degree of discomfort when dining alone; only a few of the characters take great pleasure in the ability to savour food without company. The stories in this collection describe both the pleasure and discomfort of dining alone from the point of view of diners as well as waiters and chefs. They describe the conversations, dining environments, and the other customers.

Thirty-eight students in the Graduate Certificate in Food Writing course contributed to this collection of stories about dining alone. With so few words (probably due to the assignment word limit) the narrative and characters lack depth in many stories. Although I enjoyed this collection and the variety the student writers managed to generate in this single topic, I found myself distracted by the many broken relationships that drove people to eat alone, and of the many impatient waiters. The act of eating alone is often seen as a sad, solitary act undergone through the necessity to eat rather than for the sheer epicurean pleasure of appreciating flavours and tastes and artful presentation and combinations without distraction. I recall American food writer MFK Fisher's writing on eating alone – how in overcoming the discomfort normally felt, the diner can derive great pleasure from the occasion. She wrote:

> They [people] try to forget that frightening truth. They read the newspaper or turn on the radio if they are at home. More often they flee from themselves to friend-filled clubs, or to the noisiest nearest restaurant, where other alone humans eat crowded together in a hungry ugly mob… It is a pity, an occasional meal with himself is very good for Mr. Doe. It gives him time to look about him; quiet in which to savor [sic] his present mouthful; opportunity to broil his steak in a new way or try again those dishes his wife hates. (Fisher 2004: 96)

Fisher's subject is clearly the male diner whereas most of the writers and protagonists in this collection are women. Nevertheless Fisher provides a useful anecdote: that when Lucullus, the Roman host famous for his fabulous dinners and elaborate menus, dined alone, he required his servants to pay the utmost attention to the dinner, for 'At such times Lucullus dined with Lucullus' (96). In *Dining Alone,* the opportunity to dine and have some time alone to reflect on dining is largely overlooked, and it would have been refreshing to see this and other aspects of eating alone given more coverage. A broader range of eating alone experiences could have given this collection greater variety, and might include, for instance, ordering room service and eating alone in a hotel room, solitary meals eaten at home, a sandwich in the park or eaten on the run during a rushed lunch break, or even the solitary binge eating done by people suffering from eating disorders.

Although the collection is presented as fiction, most of the stories are written in the first person, which suggests that they are written from lived experience. I felt the genre became somewhat confused. Stories such as Suzanne Le Page Langlois' 'Don't dine alone – take an iPad to dinner' (80), a clever 'how to' piece offering useful advice on getting the service

when dining out alone and David Gilligan's, 'A late lunch', a compassionate piece about the customers he observed, and engaged with, over a period of time as they dined alone in his café (70) felt more like non-fiction. Marianne Duluk's 'A recipe for nourishment', which described how she indulged her senses when dining alone when her French vegan husband was away seemed most likely fiction (17). As a reader, this was confusing, and I would have preferred knowing which stories were fiction and which were non-fiction.

What the collection does brilliantly, is to demonstrate the important role that food plays in our lives – whether these are ordinary or celebratory moments, times of grief and pain, or occasions of happy aloneness: Mandy Rowe's character in 'Chardonnay or Nebbiolo' finds no solace in her meal as it only endorses her aloneness (140); Caroline Pearce's character in 'Taking flight' remembers a 30-year marriage in a bowl of mussels (110); Camellia Aebischer's character in 'Greg' flees from a blind date and finds solace in a packet of macaroni cheese (31); Nathalie Craig's narrator in 'Cutting ties' is alone even when dining with a group of people (54); Lisa Dempster in 'From Mykonos to Meteora' celebrates the joy of eating when you are hungry (58); and La Vergne Lehmann's 'I just can't dine alone anymore' connects dining alone with a scandalous story in Australian political history (90).

As I read the stories in this collection I imagined them appearing as short articles in the weekend magazines that come with Saturday and Sunday newspapers. Santich is a trail-blazer who is shifting culinary writing from its safe and traditional space and allowing it new life as short fiction. The University of Adelaide plans to cease the Graduate Program in Food Studies but should be congratulated for its encouragement of food studies as an academic pursuit and Wakefield Press thanked for publishing this collection, encouraging food writing and giving these students the opportunity to present their writing to a wider audience.

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Jillian Adams graduated with honours in Geography and majors in Literature and Journalism and Fine Arts and went off to Paris to pursue a career in hospitality. She is a qualified teacher, a graduate of Cordon Bleu in Paris, and, until recently, was the Training and Development Manager of Coffee Academy, a joint initiative of Douwe Egberts Australia and William Angliss Institute. She completed a Masters in Oral History and Historical Memory at Monash University in 2011. Her book Barista a guide to espresso coffee *published by Pearson Australia is used widely in espresso coffee training in Australia and overseas.* A Good Brew: H. A. Bennett & Sons and tea and coffee trading in Australia*, tells the story of social and cultural change in Australia through the rich stories of people involved in our tea and coffee industries and was published in 2013. In January 2012 Jillian commenced study towards her PhD at Central*

Queensland University in the School of Education and Creative Arts. Her PhD uses creative nonfiction, based on oral histories along with research into food writing in post-war Australia, to challenge the static and often nostalgic impressions of the housewife in the 1950s. She has co-edited a special edition of on-line journal MC*, has published papers in numerous academic journals and presented papers at local and international conferences.*

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TEXT review

Reflective and pleasurably familiar

review by Dallas J Baker

Jeremy Fisher
How to Tell Your Father to Drop Dead
Fat Frog Books, Sydney 2013
ISBN 9780959035049
Pb 150pp AUD26.95

Jeremy Fisher's new collection contains both fiction and short pieces of memoir. *How to Tell Your Father to Drop Dead* explores masculinity and relationships through the lens of a gay male living in Australia. The pieces range in time frame from before homosexuality was decriminalised to our contemporary, slightly more tolerant, times.

Some of the pieces in *How to Tell Your Father to Drop Dead* are eye-witness accounts of the Gay Liberation movement in the 1970s. One of the more intimate pieces is an account of Fisher's relationship with his father, who was by all accounts an interesting character.

The autobiographical pieces are reflective and quiet in tone. Fisher's writing has a familiar quality to it that makes the work highly approachable. I often felt that I was sitting on a couch listening to a friend tell me stories about his life. That kind of writing is hard to find these days, given the current publishing climate in which action is privileged over reflection, and pace is deemed inadequate if it is anything other than rapid. Even though Fisher's writing style may be considered by some to be slightly 'unfashionable', it offers its own distinct pleasures, as in the paragraph below:

> Pup had run away, left home and hopped the train to the city when he was 16, because, despite what the state schools in Western Sydney tried to tell him, he didn't fit. He wasn't going to go from voc. ed. to dole queue and a stolen Commodore. He had the smarts to make himself a softer piece of rough trade. (1)

This is the opening paragraph to the book. It immediately conveys that this collection is not another exploration of the Australian heterosexual

middle-class, but a look at that part of our society that, for much of Fisher's life, was brushed under the carpet, even unspeakable – the gay subculture of our cities and towns.

Fisher shows us both those aspects of gay life that connect with universal themes and those that some Australians might find alien. For universal themes, the standout piece is 'Winter Afternoon', which recounts the experiences and feelings of a suburban gay man as he cares for his dying partner. On the flipside, some (more conservative) readers will struggle to find any common ground or shared experience with a number of the pieces. For example, one chapter features gay sadomasochism, not exactly the bread and butter of middle-class life.

Readers with an editorial eye will note a number of obvious typographical errors, as well as a few sentences that need refinement. This is disappointing, although not unexpected with a new and small press. There is also a sense, at times, that not all of the pieces fit well together, that perhaps a tighter theme should have been adopted. For example, the collection could have been limited to either fiction or autobiography. The inclusion of both weakens the collection a little. Having said that, this is not a serious problem as most of the pieces are strong in themselves.

Fisher is a long-term academic in writing at the University of New England, and clearly aware of the impact subtle changes to syntax can have on the tone of a text. Grammar savvy readers will note Fisher's deliberate writerly choices in the excerpt above. Fisher clearly favours a reflective (slightly removed) tone rather than a more direct one. Instead of 'He wasn't going from voc. ed. to dole queue…', Fisher writes 'He wasn't going **to go** from voc. ed. to dole queue…' This adds another measure of distance that facilitates a more reflective reading experience. Some readers might find that this distance keeps them remote from the story. For me, this distance makes for a more thoughtful encounter with the text.

This reflective distance, ensconced in a conversational tone, is a style not unfamiliar to me from gay literature of the last half of the preceding century. Perhaps this is why *How to Tell Your Father to Drop Dead* is so accessible. Whatever the reason, Fisher's latest contribution to gay literature, specifically Australian gay literature, is noteworthy.

Dallas J Baker is an Adjunct Research Fellow at Griffith University and an academic in the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Southern Cross University. Dallas is also a creative writer with work published in a number of journals and anthologies. His current research interests are memory and memoir, scriptwriting, and Creative Writing pedagogy.

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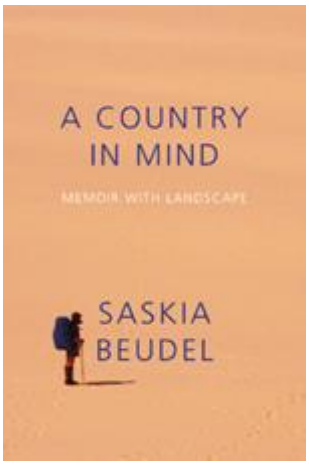
TEXT review

Walking through land and memory

review by Autumn Royal



Saskia Beudel
A Country in Mind: Memoir with Landscape
UWAP Publishing 2013
ISBN 9781742584942
Pb 378pp AUD29.99

'How do people imagine the landscapes they find themselves in? How does the land shape the imaginations of the people who dwell in it?' So asks Barry Lopez in his celebrated work *Arctic Dreams* (Lopez 2001: xxvii). Saskia Beudel positions Lopez's questions as the epigraph to *A Country in Mind: Memoir with Landscape*, engaging with such queries by exploring the intricate connections between the preconceived dichotomies of environment and culture, histories and current social issues.

At 'surface' level, it may appear incongruous to evoke a text such as Lopez's – a work exploring the Arctic terrain and its histories – as an epigraph for a book that is predominately situated in the central Australian desert. But asLopez himself writes: 'The Arctic, overall, has the classic lines of a desert landscape: spare, balanced, extended, and quiet' (Lopez 2001: xxiii). Such divergent associations are imperative to consider when reading *A Country in Mind*, as Beudel intertwines genres of memoir, travel literature, historical and ecological writing in order to reveal the complex interplay between history, memory and landscapes. In following such an interdisciplinary approach Beudel is able to shift focus between her personal insights of family history to descriptions of landscape, to detailed reportage of indigenous and settler accounts, and wider ecological issues.

Within the opening pages Beudel elucidates upon the action of walking and its intrinsic importance to her approach in composing *A Country in Mind*. As Beudel explains, it was after the deaths of her father and maternal grandmother that she felt compelled to pursue the catharsis of walking expeditions, hiking trips spanning around ten days – the act of Beudel's walking becoming more purposeful and focussed with each journey. Beudel poetically describes how the action of walking has

informed both her writing and her personal philosophy: 'Rhythm integrates into thought, into words, into language' (2).

A Country in Mind opens with an account of Beudel's final days spent with her terminally ill father. Beudel's descriptions are acute and moving, particularly for the way she captures the uncanny contrast between the obligations involved in that act of living and the awareness of an imminent death. Beudel recounts how she came to understand her father was 'close to death when he stopped giving [her] cash to buy him packets of cigarettes' (xi), and how she visited her father in hospice after attending a friend's wedding – Beudel eventually wearing the outfit she wore to the wedding as her 'funeral garb soon after, as if [she'd] chosen it for that purpose' (xiii). All of these observations are expressed in the preface, one of the most affecting sections of the book. Nevertheless an elegiac pulse is sustained throughout much of Beudel's writing.

The subsequent chapter is entitled 'Gorge'. The title suggests the depths to which Beudel involves herself in her surrounding environment, and that this has not been without risk. This chapter details a time where Beudel and her partner discover themselves in danger while crossing a gorge during a walking expedition along the Larapinta Trail in the Northern Territory. Beudel's description of her precarious ordeal creates an element of suspense, which also underlines the importance of memory and the role it may play in the process of writing. Beudel allows the reader to be aware that she is piecing together an account based on memory, this can be demonstrated in lines such as: 'I can't quite remember the exit out of that channel. Oh yes. It opened into a cave…' (8). The 'Oh yes' interjection is a direct indication of a sudden act of recollection, allowing Beudel to acknowledge her own subjectivity within this work.

Following her incident in the gorge, Beudel does not, as perhaps would be expected, develop an aversion to this area of Australia. Instead Beudel becomes captivated, asking: '…how could this place not become a place to return to?' (27). Consequently, whether it be physically or imaginatively, Beudel continues to return to the gorge: '...lodged within the western MacDonnell Ranges, where history and its legacies are up close to the surface, palpable somehow, and a microcosm of the nation's broader past' (27). This 'broader past' suggests the colonisation of Australia and the impact is has had, and still continues to have, on Indigenous Australians and their relationship to the land.

After recalling the writing of Linda Jaivin, Beudel introduces the West MacDonnell Ranges with the paintings of renowned Aboriginal artist, Albert Namatjira. Beudel vividly describes and contextualises her surroundings driving towards Redbank Gorge along Namatjira Drive:

> The drive flanks folded quartzite and sandstone ranges that were produced around 300 million years ago, and now create a complex landscape eroded into multiple ridgelines and gorges in rich hues, rockfaces with looming blue peaks, interspersed with pale swathes of open space, bleached spinifex, low mulga scrub, and open soil. It's all instantly recognisable as Namatjira country. (28)

Such emphasis on Namatjira's paintings allows Beudel not only to acknowledge their cultural and historical importance, but also to accentuate how his art has 'taught us to see this landscape in particular ways' (29). There can be an appreciation for the landscape, but Beudel is

acknowledging that she, and all other non-Indigenous Australians, are still gazing upon an environment that is deeply sacred to its original people. As Beudel explains, settlement has impacted upon the contours of the Australian landscape and, in turn, the Aboriginal Dreaming:

> …what is at stake in the wrecking of ceremonial sites, sacred trees, waterholes, and so forth, is not simply physiological ruin, or attack on a sentimental attachment to place: it is rupture to a whole order of being, a whole ontological system that plays back and forth between human beings and the topographical and ecological specifics of their environment. (168)

It is Beudel's multifaceted approach that enables her to avoid repeating a shallow and rigid account of the environments and materials she interacts with, revealing the tangential interplay between memory, histories, ecology and understandings of place within landscape.

To conclude, this extract introduces Beudel's writing of her father's history, demonstrating how Beudel endeavours to problematise a linear understanding of the past, allowing for the gaps – the gorges – to breathe and endure:

> The events I'm touching upon involve at least two sets of conflicting memories and histories. Because of this it is almost impossible for me to write redemptively of my father's past, or to recuperate it in any simple way, especially writing from within a settler culture such as Australia's, where the question of dispossession is still pressing and unsettling.' (51-52)

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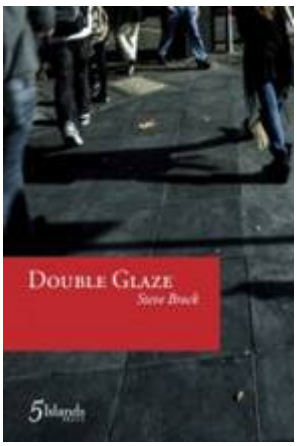
TEXT review

Double bind: modern discontents

review by Mary Pomfret



Steve Brock
Double Glaze
Five Islands Press, Melbourne 2013
ISBN 9780734048547
Pb 86pp AUD25.95

Double glazing involves two sheets of glass separated by air, thus creating a space between two rigid but transparent panels. Through this title image, Steve Brock's recent collection *Double Glaze*, from the outset, advances the notion of dualities and the invisible force that separates but at the same time, connects. Brock sifts through the tensions and conflicting desires that are present in this territory, the space between potential lives and possible selves. Taking us into the prosaic life domains of 'Work', 'The Commute', and the more intimate concerns of 'Writing' and 'Family', Brock's characters seem to swing on a pendulum between what is and the desire for what could be. Set against the urban backdrop of the city of Adelaide, the poetic voices express the dilemmas that exist in the oppositions of attachment and freedom; safety and insecurity; contentment and discomfort; satisfaction and frustration; and the known and the unknown.

For the reader who has lived in or even visited Adelaide, the distinct sense of place in these poems is difficult to ignore. The collection is full of references to the city's iconic places and venues, both past and present, including 'Café Paradiso' (11) in the poem of the same name; 'Falafel House /on Hindley today' (12); 'the seaside suburb of Glenelg', 'Hallett Cove' (74) and 'Port Willunga Beach / just below / the *Star of Greece Café*' (70) However, there is a sense that the city of Adelaide is neither the subject, nor one of the chief concerns of Brock's poems.

It may seem a strange comparison given the style and era, but the collection's title poem 'Double Glaze' has echoes of the sentiments of romantic yearning in AB 'Banjo' Paterson's 'Clancy of the Overflow'. The poem 'Double Glaze' expresses the ache of longing:

as I gaze
out the office
window
looking for something
outside of me
to fill
the emptiness (45)

Whereas Paterson's poem reflects a nostalgic craving for freedom from 'my dingy little office' where 'foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city' (Paterson 1991: 105) floats through an open window, in Steve Brock's poem the window is not open, nor perhaps can it be, causing '… a density / to things' (45). Through a different window 'in a pub/laughing/over after work drinks', Brock envisages those 'desperate to get in', evoking images of asylum seekers with 'children drowning' but who can't be heard, 'above / the background noise' (46). Politics and popular opinion creates a hard, invisible divide between people, just like glass, and the poem 'Double Glaze' suggests that much of what separates and isolates people cannot be seen. Invisible partitions and barriers are exacerbated by what isn't mentioned as 'we wave goodbye' (46) and might be more insurmountable than geographical borders, causing 'crashing against the edge' (46), as hard to penetrate as double glazed glass.

In her essay *A Room of One's Own*,Virginia Woolf pondered 'how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and … worse, perhaps, to be locked in' (Woolf 1928: 25-6). Throughout this collection, there is a sense of being locked in rather than being locked out, of both entrapment and of a longing for escape, particularly in relation to the city work environment. In the poem of the same name, Brook uses the metaphor of a Buddhist mousetrap, a construction that allows an unsuspecting creature to enter with ease but from which escape is extraordinarily difficult if not impossible. The poetic voice laments

they let us go
each evening
only we come back
the next day. (20)

Brock offers a technique for surviving the daily drudgery of the treadmill routine of the daily return to the place of entrapment – work – in 'not depressed, hung over'. Survival is simple provided you 'cut your hair occasionally' and 'iron your shirt / each morning' (43) and:

tell yourself
each Monday morning
you're not depressed
just
hung over. (43)

In 'travelling companion' the mood of alienation is lessened. The narrator acknowledges another commuter travelling on a parallel but ultimately divergent track. This companion, 'like an old friend', albeit a transient one, also travels 'this even length of steel', though their destinies differ: 'our hearts fixed / on our chosen paths / with equal intent' (42).

The angst of a writer attempting to continue with the craft whilst at the same time earning a living is palpable in 'unpublished'. The writer is filled with regret that 'my heart / is the negative of a photograph /

unpublished' (62). By contrast, the poem 'the writer's life' gives a lighthearted take on the cliché of the struggling writer, with an injection of humour. The writing friend 'is always about / to go some place / & write something' (57) but:

> as it turns out
> he didn't write a line
> the joint project fell through
> the girl fell through
> the apartment fell through. (58)

Whilst writing is a pursuit often fraught with frustration, the family offers more contentment- or does it? The voices in the section 'Family' suggest a conflict between love and commitment and the desire for freedom and responsibility. The voice in 'on my 37th Birthday (Hallett Cove)' declares 'I've found my place / here at 37' (76). And yet despite the joy of a birthday on the beach, with pelicans, fossils and handstands there is still a pressing anxiety because 'time's running out' despite family and the joys if offers 'it doesn't leave time / for much else' (77).

Steve Brock's *Double Glaze* needles away at the discontents, constraints and pace of modern ways of living, but at the same time is not cynical about the joy of love and family and in this milieu 'things are looking / far better / than one might expect' (73).

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Mary Pomfret is writing a creative PhD at La Trobe University, Bendigo. Her work has appeared in a variety of Australian and international journals. Her collection, Writing in Virginia's Shadow*, was published in by Ginninderra Press in 2012 and* Cleaning out the Closet *is forthcoming in 2014.*

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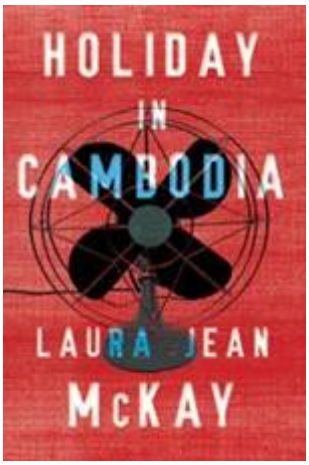
TEXT review

Never mind the earworm, read this book

review by Victoria Reeve



Laura Jean McKay
Holiday in Cambodia
Black Inc, Collingwood 2013
ISBN 9781863956062
Pb 224pp AUD24.99

Holiday in Cambodia by Laura Jean McKay presents a series of short stories themed around the Dead Kennedys' song of the same name. Western arrogance, ignorance and wealth provide narrative material in this beautiful collection. The stories nonetheless remain stories of Cambodia and Cambodians. McKay skilfully represents and critiques various attitudes of privilege, but her portrayals are, for the most part, sympathetic and demonstrate an empathetic engagement with the subjectivities of Westerners and Cambodians alike. With one exception (the second story in this collection), she refuses to mock the narrow-minded Western viewpoint and treats her characters with compassion. This critical perspective is even applied to the Westerner who reads this collection. As consumers of Cambodia in its literary iteration, we are also prone to the foibles of Western pretension. The opening story, 'Route Four', effectively challenges the presumptions of the reader. It begins by conventionally privileging Western figures and implying their greater significance as protagonists. Seemingly about the journey of four tourists, who will be captured by Khmer Rouge during a train hold-up, the denouement reveals this story to be really about the fate of the small Cambodian boy who follows them. The self-assurance, wealth and novelty of the four tourists places them central to any anticipated action and the boy incidental to that activity. But it is the very incidental nature of the story's shocking conclusion that commands the reader's attention and forces a retrospective view of the narrative and its establishment of the boy's significance throughout.

This sets the reader on track to understanding the collection and its author's love and compassion for Cambodia. Challenging the assumptions of significance and the hierarchies of perspective that underlie the Western

narrative tradition, McKay incorporates Cambodian experience of tourism in what are almost marginal expressions of pathos. When she writes, 'It was as though someone had packed the sky into a box over Phnom Penh' (25), she captures the sense of disenfranchisement that indigence provokes. The phrase, at once beautiful and highly successful as a description of monsoonal weather, carries the suggestion of ownership and privilege associated with someone who packs a bag or a box. A touristic eye thus invades a narrative that otherwise makes the traveller and the tourist incidental (the story, 'Holiday, I Love You' focuses instead on the lives of two factory workers). The sentence, appearing early in the story, bears an ironical relationship to the action, which recounts the failed institution of a holiday for the factory workers.

McKay's skill as a writer is apparent throughout *Holiday in Cambodia*, but it is in the last story of the collection that I came to appreciate her ability to sustain and obscure the actual revelation of important detail in her narratives. Although I found the beginning a little clunky in terms of the narratorial voice (it took some time for the speaker's tone to settle), 'The Deep Ambition of Rossi' builds artfully to its conclusion with a matter-of-fact ease. It also introduces, or re-introduces, insights about the Western perspective of Cambodians. 'The Deep Ambition of Rossi' emphasises the limitations of the colonial perspective, but no one is exempt from appearing ignorant when faced with the complexities of tourism and differences between the host and visiting culture. Even the aid-workers who pride themselves on their cultural sensitivity reveal their awkwardness. The hyper-vigilance of cultural sensitivity demonstrated by one such individual (the narrator of 'Coming Up') actually hampers her ability to connect with local people. By contrast, her visiting mother befriends a grieving family despite her brashness and apparent insensitivity. The story's trajectory seems to suggest that respecting another culture does not require the suppression of one's own culture; rather, respect can be found in attempts to relate to another in personal terms, even when such attempts risk making one appear culturally ignorant.

I enjoyed *Holiday in Cambodia* – even if it set up an earworm that persisted for a week in the form of the Dead Kennedys' song – and although the second story's conventional form was not suited to the idea that it carried. It is an insightful book, written with the kind of quiet charm I find in Chekhov's short stories, and gentle with eloquence. The restraint of its author's writing, which offered some beautiful descriptions at times (and the occasional enigmatic phrase, demanding deeper reflection), allowed the stories – rather than the writing – to be central to the reading experience. This is important because, once a story has wormed into your ear, it invites repeated reflection and appreciation. The well-written stories in this collection provide a lasting pleasure, rewarding the reader with their gentle nudging insights and depiction of Cambodia.

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