

**The Cuckold and the Vampires:**an essay  
on some aspects of conservative manipulation of art and  
literature, including experimental, and the conservatives'  
creation of conflict



**Jennifer Maiden**



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First published in 2020 by Quemar Press

ABN 75691360521

P.O. Box 4, Penrith, NSW, 2751, Australia.

<https://quemarpress.weebly.com/>

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Maiden, Jennifer ***The Cuckold and the Vampires: an essay on some aspects of conservative political manipulation of art and literature, including the experimental, and the conservatives' creation of conflict.***

Electronic Edition ISBN: 978-0-6485552-5-4

**Previous Publications from Quemar Press: 2016:** *Play With Knives - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.), Play With Knives: 2: Complicity - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.), The Metronome - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.), Play With Knives: 3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.). 2017:* *Truth in Discourse: Observations by Montaigne - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.), Aucassin and Nicolette - Anonymous, Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.), Play With Knives: 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies - Jennifer Maiden (Elec. Ed.). 2018:* *Appalachian Fall: Poems About Poverty in Power - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.), Play With Knives 1&2: Complicity (Combined volume) - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed.), Selected Poems 1967-2018 - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.), Play With Knives:3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker & Play With Knives: 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies (Combined volume) - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed.), Vera Rudner: A Study - Katharine Margot Toohey (Paperback Ed.), Gugemer - Marie de France, Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.), Play With Knives:5: George and Clare, the Malachite and the Diamonds - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.). 2019:* *brookings: the noun - Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed., Elec. Ed.), Lanval - Marie de France, Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Elec. Ed.), Once She Had Escaped the Tower: Aucassin and Nicolette, and Marie de France's Gugemer - Translator - Katharine Margot Toohey (Paperback Ed.), Workbook Questions: Writing of Torture, Trauma Experience - Margaret Bennett and Jennifer Maiden (Paperback Ed.).*

**Previous Publications by Jennifer Maiden: Poetry Collections** *Tactics, 1974; The Problem of Evil, 1975; The Occupying Forces, 1975; Mortal Details, 1977; Birthstones, 1978; The Border Loss, 1979; For The Left Hand, 1981; The Trust, 1988; Bastille Day, 1990; Selected Poems of Jennifer Maiden, 1990; The Winter Baby, 1990; Acoustic Shadow, 1993; Mines, 1999; Friendly Fire, 2005; Pirate Rain, 2009; Intimate Geography: Selected Poems 1991-2010, 2012; Liquid Nitrogen, 2012; The Violence of Waiting, 2013; Drones and Phantoms, 2014; The Fox Petition, 2015; The Metronome Elec. Ed., 2016; Paperback Ed., 2017; Appalachian Fall, 2018; Selected Poems 1967-2018, 2018; brookings: the noun, 2019; The Espionage Act, 2020.*

**Novels** *The Terms, 1982; Play With Knives, 1990. New Revised Elec. Ed., 2016; Play With Knives: 2: Complicity, 2016; Play With Knives: 3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker, 2016; Play With Knives: 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies, 2017; Play With Knives: 1 & 2: Complicity (combined vol.), 2018; Play With Knives: 3: George and Clare and the Grey Hat Hacker & 4: George and Clare, the Baby and the Bikies (combined vol.), 2018; Play With Knives: 5: George and Clare, the Malachite and the Diamonds, 2018.*

**Non-fiction** *Workbook Questions: Writing of Torture, Trauma Experience - with Margaret Bennett, 2019.*





Jennifer Maiden was born in Penrith, New South Wales, and has had thirty-three books published - twenty-five poetry collections, six novels and two nonfiction works. Among her many awards are three Kenneth Slessor Prizes for Poetry, two C. J. Dennis Prizes for Poetry, the overall Victorian Prize for Literature, the Harri Jones Memorial Prize, the H.M.Butterly-F.Earle Hooper Award (University of Sydney), the Grenfell Henry Lawson Festival Prize, the FAW Christopher Brennan Award for lifetime achievement in poetry, two The Melbourne Age Poetry Book of the Year awards, the overall Melbourne Age Book of the Year and the ALS Gold Medal. She was shortlisted for the Griffin International Poetry Prize. In 2011, the Australian magazine of politics, society and culture, *The Monthly*, listed her collection, *Friendly Fire* (2005), as the Poetry book in their selection of Twenty Australian Masterpieces since 2000, when they asked twenty Australian critics to identify 'the most significant work of art in their field since 2000'. She has been Writer in Residence at STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors), at universities and educational institutions, lectured at universities, and has also conducted over a thousand community literary workshops. Following her work as Writer in Residence at the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, Jennifer Maiden and the torture and trauma clinician, academic and researcher, Margaret Bennett collaborated, in 2019, on a workbook to assist torture or trauma survivors to write of their experiences, entitled *Workbook Questions: Writing of Torture, Trauma Experience. The Espionage Act*, Maiden's most recent poetry collection, was published at the beginning of 2020.



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## **The Cuckold and the Vampires:**

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It is a lethal business. When Márquez realised that the new avant-garde writing periodical that was serialising his novel was a project of the CIA, he wrote to his friend, the editor, that he was withdrawing his work and felt like a 'cuckold'. For him, of course, the history of such U.S. intervention dated back to the United Fruit massacre of protesting banana-pickers, depicted in his writing as a trainload of corpses, and would eventually date forward to the murder of another friend, Allende, and the Pinochet coup in Chile. In my recent *The Espionage Act* poem, *What if all the village were vampires?*, Márquez incarnates to confront an archetypal critic about these matters.

Writing the poem, I kept in mind that Márquez attributed the 'Magic Realism' in his stories to having been brought up by his grandmother, as the stories she told intermingled fiction and reality without any demarcation. In my poem, therefore, I have him quoting a story I think she might well have told: the traditional one that a visitor suspects someone in a village of being a vampire and eventually realises that all the villagers are vampires.

One point of the use of this fable is to suggest that the damage done to Márquez by the 1966 *New World* (*Mundo Nuevo*) magazine betrayal was not confined to that particular incident, but continued to pervade his sense of hope and his sense of self-trust for the rest of his life. This despair can be seen in one of his last novels, *The General in His Labyrinth*, about the death of Simon Bolivar. Contemporaneous with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the novel portrays Bolivar's death as an experience of defeat and disappointment - so much so that Margaret Atwood saw it as illustrating how the Revolution eats its progenitors. To Márquez, who had so passionately described Allende defending himself against his assassination for hours with the submachine gun that was a gift from their mutual friend Fidel Castro, the defeat involved in the Bolivar novel is not the defeat of a political ideology but the defeat of the possibility of optimism and of the sense of self.



I believe that having been duped by *New World* would have permanently shaken Márquez's self-confidence. How much, he may have wondered, had he suspected there was a problem before denouncing it because of imminent public revelation? How much did he miss a secure and seductive environment where politics could be comfortably left-wing but secondary to the celebration of art? *New World* was a cleverly supportive and ego-enhancing setting, originating in the plan by the CIA's Cord Meyer to 'court the compatible left'. As with another CIA-created magazine, *Encounter*, there was usually an ambience of balance, erudition and enthusiasm. One opened it and became a member of some civilised Athenaeum. I remember how much I enjoyed reading Borges and other fine writers in *Encounter* when I was a literature-avid teenager, including sharpening my debating powers against its peculiarly eloquent support for the Vietnam War, a war which I was opposing articulately in poems and letters such as some to the pre-Murdoch *Australian*. It was possibly its partial political directness, of course, which doomed *Encounter*. Other CIA creations, like *Paris Review*, were not so politically explicit. And yet other publications sponsored by the CIA's Congress for Cultural Freedom, like the Australian *Quadrant*, seem to have cheerfully admitted their funding and to have seen it as no *real* problem. *Quadrant* trotted forward regardless on its own accustomed track, including with the Northrop Frye scholar, Literature bureaucrat and Liberal Party publicist Imre Salusinszky as its Editorial Adviser.

In the course of this essay, I would like to return occasionally to the discussion about Márquez, but also to begin to speculate about the effect of some other stratagems employed by Conservative forces to influence the personal and political psychology of artists and their world. The well-documented CIA sponsorship and promotion of the paintings of Jackson Pollock is especially rich with contradictions. If realising the motivation of his patrons and rejecting it still damaged Márquez deeply, as no doubt they intended, the tacit acceptance of similar patrons may have demolished Pollock utterly. In ideological terms, Abstract Expressionism was championed worldwide by the CIA to counter Socialist Realism. It was also used to oppose Surrealism, which had always had a Guernica-like predilection to be ant-war and leftist. The abstraction in expressionism, too, suited the CIA's delight in hidden and mutable meanings. The directive in all intelligence services to recruit or



manipulate those with 'addictive personalities' was suited to the CIA's general view of the nature of artists, but it was especially suited to the drug-like subjective flourishes of Expressionist art. In artistic terms, Pollock's natural development may have been to return at least briefly and in some more complex form to the socialist referential work with which he had begun, and perhaps to investigate more representationally his own eroticism and fierce ambivalence towards women. As it was, he was trapped in a vast politically defined persona, ceased painting, substituted drinking as a public art form, and killed himself and a new female acquaintance - also maiming his mistress - in a car crash so contrived that it could have been described as his last large artwork, rather as someone once described Sylvia Plath's suicide as her last great poem.

To progress in this discussion, however, I'm not inclined to agree with the latter description as it appertains to Plath. In her life and death she was caught up with the career and theories of the well-off, ambitious critic Al Alvarez. In her actual work, there is a continuing left-wing political focus which Alvarez's popularisation of her persona minimises in favour of the dramatic, anti-decorous and self-destructive artistic qualities he was recommending as an aesthetic in general. But her mature work itself - as seen, too, in her diaries - is preoccupied by the dangerous American Empire, as it was evincing itself in the 1950s. *The Bell Jar* begins with horror at the execution of the Rosenbergs and then depicts in first person the bizarre, autistic, 'normal' society that perpetrated it. Her poems are insistent that Western Society has failed to recognise or combat the Fascism of the Second World War. The existence of the covert Operation Paperclip - importing thousands of scientists and technicians from Nazi Germany to work in the U.S. - is completely compatible with her preoccupations and fears.

There is certainly a conflation in her last poems between the struggle with Nazism and her own capitulation/escape in suicide, but the act of self-destruction is not inevitable in either artistic or existential terms, and she seems to have organised her suicide in a way that might have permitted rescue, without her seeing that rescue as a threat to her art.

I remember first reading about her work, again in early adolescence, in a very compelling article in that important organ of the CIA's Operation Mockingbird, *Time Magazine*. She was described as being in 'an inferno',



the epitome of a tortured artist, and to some extent the tortured young mother. There was a direct equation between her suffering, her self-destructiveness and her poems. The additional Feminist factor regarding Ted Hughes' infidelity and his artistic rivalry hadn't been introduced at that point into the persona. My interim summation is that her mother's later concession that more Feminism would have helped Sylvia is correct, but that I'd argue Sylvia should have used Feminism to unburden herself not just of Hughes but of Alvarez.

Such politically conservative creation of the generic artistic persona as a volatile and irrational one is another subject I would like to consider. The concept of comic and peculiar 'Poetry Wars' in Australia is a case in point. There have been several instances of savage but stylised public conflict between Australian poets and these conflicts seem to me suspicious in their nature and in their organisation.

Recently, I gave a talk on a panel which also involved the brilliant Rozanna Lilley describing the renovation pit inside her childhood front door, into which literary visitors fell regularly. Thinking of poets and accidents, I remarked that once I'd told John Tranter that my poetry was an attempt to mend its own accident, and he'd responded that his was an attempt to create its own accident. The chairperson - very well-read and intelligent - misunderstood and presupposed hostility, smiling 'Poetry Wars'. On another occasion, I wrote something explanatory about a former employer and one response on Twitter was that it was pointless to follow 'Poetry Wars'. It is particularly marked now that even a benign memory of one poet by another, or a brief commentary by a poet about a publisher, can be greeted with that knowing reference to 'Poetry Wars', and therefore dismissed out of hand. It was, I'd suggest, a major function of contrived 'Poetry Wars' to discredit the judgement of artists in general and to make it more difficult for any poet to engage in respected and emancipating political analysis.

This is also crucial in that without an informed political overview artists themselves can sometimes literally die of bewilderment in a microcosm, internalising the forces distorting them. Throughout my career of over half a century, many of my colleagues have died or been destroyed in situations where the macrocosm should have been given - and should be given - more discussion. Again, it is a lethal business.





In relation to the macrocosm and the microcosm, I have been thinking, for example why Joan Maas and Grace Perry died. I hope to consider this at times throughout the essay, but at the moment there are two key images that seem to me most important. The first is one recounted by Robert Adamson in his highly skilful and deliberately immediate autobiography, *Inside Out*. Adamson, Carl Harrison-Ford and others had instigated a revolt at the Australian *Poetry Magazine* and Poetry Society, using student members as democratic numbers. Briefly, the result was that poets with less experimental styles and tastes were ousted. *Poetry Magazine* became *New Poetry* and Grace Perry left and started *Poetry Australia* for work that had at times a more traditional style (although this was often open to experiment and variation). I was about twenty at the time and had not met any of them. I lived at Penrith, studying for the Higher School Certificate by private study and submitting my literary work by putting it in envelopes and posting it. My work was accepted by both those poetry publications, and others, including *The Bulletin*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*. Joan Maas was a poet who had encouraged Adamson as he rehabilitated himself at the end of his prison sentence. Her partner was the poet Roland Robinson. Roland was bewildered and furious at his loss of numbers at *Poetry Magazine*, and Maas asked Adamson to dinner to attempt some form of dialogue. Adamson describes the dinner she carefully prepared, including some young potatoes. There was no real mending of the rift, however. Later, and beyond the scope of that autobiography, Maas, as I have been told, chose to walk into the sea. Interestingly, when I discussed that dinner description with my daughter, she had the same thought as I did: that if this essay has no other purpose, it should at least try to warn any other poet away from the microcosmic unwariness of metaphorically offering potatoes in a poignant attempt at solution in a situation where overwhelming macrocosmic forces are at play.

It is very hard to recognise the hopeful self-deceptions when in a microcosm, let alone the microcosm itself. I first met Grace Perry at a conference she had organised for her *Poetry Australia* about 'Writing in the Pacific'. It was at Macquarie University, which I had just started to attend with a Commonwealth Scholarship. I was twenty-one, and Grace and I at once began to enjoy a lasting, amused and confrontative banter with each other. During the course of this first meeting, she declared to



me that before this I had been looking through the keyhole, but now I was actually in the room. As the conference consisted of people like Judith Wright, Bruce Beaver and Alec Hope, she had a point in terms of literary celebrity, and - despite my having already travelled fairly extensively in Walden - I was certainly intrigued to be there, and by them. But Grace's definition of microcosm and macrocosm in that conversation has always troubled me, especially after her suicide years later, which was attributed partly to her not receiving continued funding for her literary projects. There were undoubtedly more reasons than that for it, of course, but I had visited her in the claustrophobic Old Magistrate's house at Berrima some time earlier, and I wish we had talked more deeply about overall long-term issues, such as the future of *Poetry Australia* - the editing of which she had delegated to Les Murray, but about which she was uneasy - and some of the forces at work in a mysterious literary universe. Her professions as a cattle breeder and doctor didn't serve her well, because of their pragmatic close-focus. She was in the room, no doubt, and I was no doubt still looking in at it through the keyhole, but I was looking in from a larger space, simply because I was still standing outside - although never outside literature as such.

Literary microcosms are difficult to escape, however, and the bewilderment in them is increased by ridicule, often from those who have designed them. I am uneasy that a recent very successful poetry collection by a Creative Writing Professor had as its subject the pathologising of unsuccessful writers who are depicted as willing to donate organs in order to have their work, even anonymously, published. I recall that one of my many earlier publishers would email their currently secure authors with witty vignettes about evading pursuit from authors with unsuitable manuscripts. The philosophy in that poetry collection serves to underline the intensity and vulnerability of authorship, but it also unintentionally reinforces the opinion of some academics, critics and publishers that writers take writing far too seriously, have no self-insight, and unless deemed suitable by authority figures, would be far saner doing something else.

Pathologising, as we've begun to discuss, is a consistent conservative tactic against art. It was interesting that a recent reviewer described my poems as having 'conspiracy theories' - a term I'd thought was beginning



to be dated, as it has long been sourced to a 1967 CIA directive sent to counteract criticism of the Warren Commission. Murdoch's David Aaronovitch did come to the phrase's defence in a piece showing it had been used sometimes previously, but there is no doubt that its use multiplied wildly in the press after the CIA directive. We shouldn't let such devices inhibit our curiosity here, and no device should prevent authors from analysing the existence of macrocosms in order to survive.

Nevertheless, my favourite historian (apart from G.M.Trevelyan, whose studies of Fox and the Whigs was so instructive for Aneurin Bevan) has always been A.J.P Taylor, who saw history as being composed often of accidents to do with individual personality and circumstances. Marxism is wonderfully aphoristic, but it has too many anomalies. It is contradicted by agrarian revolutions and so on, and tends in my experience to be reiterated most often by covert agents of the Right Wing, who think it makes them sound bona fide, and that it helps them understand the opposition. But, again nevertheless, as I observe more and age more, it does seem to me that a macrocosmic theory of organised events mitigated by and attempting to incorporate the unexpectedness of personality is the most useful model to identify. In politics, as Taylor observed, the impossible always happens, but I'd suggest that this presupposes an insidious appletart, a system of commodities and transactions, that the Good Spirit of the Universe and Human Nature can upset, often at the last minute.

In my recent poem about the Nobel Prize as a contest between left-wing and right-wing forces, I quoted a memo from the Director of the CIA's Operation AEDINOSAUR (AE was the prefix for Russia), John Maury to the CIA's Operations Head, Frank Wisner. He stressed that Pasternak was the desirable candidate for whom to manipulate, as 'the heresy [heresy against Russia] *DrZhivago* preaches - political passivity - is fundamental' There is a similar philosophy there to that of the CIA's Cord Meyer's recommendation to 'court the compatible left' - to place it in a neutral or right-wing context - and the case of Márquez, or of Abstract Expressionism. Writing my poem about the Prize, I discovered that Pinter's great 2005 Nobel Prize acceptance lecture had fortuitous 'er' rhymes and that excerpts from it could be line-stopped:



## **Diary Poem: Uses of the Nobel Prize**

In her comment on my poem about Borges in Geneva  
- where he and the Archetypal Critic from Australia,  
on the blue shores of the Lake, haunted each other,  
both bluey haunted by the Nobel Prize - a reviewer  
remarked she could think of no better contender  
for the Nobel than I was. How could any responder  
not revel in the mischief that would cause? I wonder  
how it would fit in with the real Prize's agenda,  
as seen in its history, such as conflict between Russia  
and the CIA in the Fifties: Operation AEDINOSAUR  
was what the CIA called their careful strategy for  
creating Boris Pasternak's anti-Soviet persona  
to win the Nobel Prize, which the Russians in their  
turn blocked but got it for Sholokhov (who was better  
actually at writing, but that's perhaps a lesser matter).  
John Maury, AEDINOSAUR's busy Director  
wrote in a memo to CIA Operations Head, Frank Wisner,  
establishing a credo: 'The heresy [against Russia] which Dr  
Zhivago preaches - political passivity - is', he can reassure:  
'fundamental'. So it must have caused bother later  
when the great acceptance-speech by Pinter,  
in his 2005 Nobel Prize lecture, defied America:  
'Hundreds of thousands of deaths...Did they take place? The answer  
is yes...But you wouldn't know it. It never happened. Nothing ever  
happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't...It didn't matter.  
You have to hand it to America...a quite clinical manipulation of power



...masquerading as a force for universal good,' said the Nobel winner:  
'a brilliant, even witty, highly successful act of hypnosis...A writer's  
life is a highly vulnerable, almost naked activity...You find no shelter,  
no protection - unless you lie...When we look into a mirror  
...the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-  
ending range of reflections. But sometimes a writer  
has to smash the mirror - for it is on the other side of that mirror  
that the truth stares at us...the real truth of our lives', concluded Pinter  
'and our societies is a crucial obligation...It is in fact mandatory.' There  
the CIA clearly had conniptions. There, might have gone forever  
the attempt to turn the prize to pure introspection. Neruda,  
quoted succinctly by Pinter, wouldn't have helped that either,  
before he died mysteriously in Chile. Lord, would I rather  
a Mercedes or the Nobel? Lord, the Mercedes is safer,  
although the CIA have now devised a controller  
of car electronics from a distance, the revealer  
of this being Wikileaks' Vault Seven. Paul Robeson's fear  
that they'd damage his brakes seems gentler  
in comparison. At any rate some accusation of mild gender  
molestation meant the Nobel was postponed until later  
this year, this time, and that gives a double chancer  
to the Company, if their act is quite together,  
the Russians being more involved in Syria.  
In my poem, Borges seemed jealous a Salusinszky manoeuvre  
would win Murnane the prize, but the Critic could reassure  
him that this meant nothing sinister. And labyrinths of art never  
preclude mirroring any blackness behind the mirror.





I am dazzled by glass fragments trodden under,  
rippling light as blue as mountain lakes, but colder.

So we will continue to try here to respect what Pinter considered mandatory and to smash the mirror of the microcosm, to try to look at the macrocosm behind it.

Later in the essay, for example, I'd like to examine the role of the Nineteenth Century critic John Ruskin in establishing the magnificent innovative art of Turner but subsequently directly inspiring British patriots such as Cecil Rhodes in the colonialism and national rivalries that created the First World War. I'd also like to discuss Christine de Pizan, the Fifteenth Century French poet who conservatively defended the Monarchy, but has a high reputation as a seminal Feminist. Of particular interest is the stylised and time-framed literary debate she organised against a male author of *The Romance of the Rose*, to argue that women had status, chastity and dignity. There is a contrast, however, with the earlier work of Marie de France, in which a woman's full development can include her sexuality. Christine utilises or obeys rather than subverting social conventions, and her work is particularly interesting in understanding Feminism if it remains in part a conservative force.

In the matter of stylised literary conflict, I've also been wondering recently how much of the 1990s Helen Demidenko scandal in Australia was a partly planned and partly spontaneous 'false flag', although there is no way of knowing yet if that was so and if so who was aware of this at the time. At University of Queensland, the 20-year-old Demidenko had established an assertive and conflicting persona, with several stated origins, and the manuscript of *The Hand That Signed the Paper* (1993) was already known in Queensland literary circles. Its Vogel Award win (against objections by one judge) ensured that the manuscript was accepted swiftly and smoothly by a publisher (one of my old almae matres, A&U, who had published my own *Play With Knives* -1990 - novel but found my anti-Iraq War novel *Complicity* manuscript -1991 - too hot to touch). The A&U publication of the Demidenko resulted in a Miles Franklin Award judged by the famously conservative Professor Kramer. But timing starts to seem a little out of sync then. The first powerful denunciation of the book was by the also famously conservative Gerard Henderson in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He at once appeared in the media to debate Demidenko, who inserted a reference to him as representing Jews into the altercation. The many in Queensland who knew Helen wasn't a Demidenko still couldn't be bothered to come to the



party (one might imagine an Intelligence Officer looking at his watch by then), and her 'Ukrainian' folk displays grew ever more theatrical, even inspiring later semiotic academic analysis. Eventually, there had to be a public denunciation and an enquiry by a local journalist. There was then a strange polarisation between two right-wing forces. Kramer and the *Quadrant* people, including Les Murray, its Literary Editor, became champions of the book, defending its anti-Communism and literary style. Others such as Henderson denounced its antisemitism and anti-authenticity. There were also separate conservative and socialist attacks on academic post-modernism for condoning stylised lack of authorial identity. There was no doubt some distrust as well as co-operation between the CIA and Israel as the Soviet Union dissolved and there was a rush to establish new conventions and convolutions, but there's no need to assume that either *Quadrant* or Henderson were involved in those particular vicissitudes. It's sufficient simply that in the result Henderson appear less anti-communist and *Quadrant* less conventional. Henderson mentioned the right-wing antisemitic League of Rights, but it's hard to see *Quadrant* making a play for that tiny and erratic readership. So: *cui bono*? Because of the scandal, writers in general were held in much lower esteem by the general public, but *Quadrant* and Kramer became defined as more literary purist and more libertarian right-wing, with higher profiles, and Henderson as a champion against prejudice, even if that prejudice were right-wing. The book had by then won the ALS Gold Medal. The people who then founded the magazine *Heat* (later to become Giramondo publishing - another of my old almae matres - and who eventually at a small remove conceived the *Sydney Review of Books*) named their outrage at the Demidenko novel as one of their motivations, thus re-positioning themselves (via their already established strong objection to antisemitism) from a possibly right-wing earlier stance to an apparently more left-wing position, as if rejecting the novels' vehement anti-communist sentiments. This also involved negating any earlier academic assistance to them from Professor Kramer (and ipso facto distancing their earlier connection with *Encounter's* ex-editor, the thesis-supervising conservative Professor Kermode). The Demidenko book's author eventually became an accomplished Edinburgh law graduate and a consistent force for the libertarian right-wing. In the public mind, the enduring image of the affair is probably that of the group of performers at Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in maxi dresses and long flaxen wigs, swaying along and cupping their faces winsomely in their fingers - indelibly the Helen Demidenkos. Perhaps there was always more than one.



Considering conservative theory, since we've referred to *Quadrant* and Salusinszky, we should consider how the work of Northrop Frye in traditionalising literary diction and imposing a coherent but inherited cultural meaning may impede actual meaning and context, rather as Professor Kermode's theory of time-recurring general social protest undermined the significance of particular protests, such as those against the Vietnam War. We should return, too, to the subject of 'Poetry Wars' and their reliance on an accompanying conceptual criticism and theory to disparage and disempower art. The current contests for the Nobel Prize are also still very relevant, as is more about the stylised and less ruthless literary conflicts, such as that between Paterson and Lawson, and another more ruthless dichotomy in Australian poetry - that regarding the Vietnam War.

Discussing Vietnam, I am remembering back to a strange time in history: the late Sixties, when many ingenious arguments were being made by right-wing forces to support the Domino Theory. When I was seventeen, I had been trying to write a play about the Irish revolutionary Michael Collins. I was corresponding backwards and forwards with the idealistic theatre critic on *The Australian*, Francis Evers, a young Irishman who was a devoted Collins enthusiast and who spontaneously copied out in longhand the full description of Collins in death ('He might have been Napoleon in marble...') and sent it to me from an Irish biography of the doctor Oliver St. John Gogarty (Buck Mulligan in our mutually admired *Ulysses*). At the same time, I was passionately opposed to the Vietnam War and *The Australian* was publishing various debates about that war. The at-the-time well-known right-wing commentator Frank Knopfelmacher and the poet Evan Jones wrote a joint letter in favour of the war citing George Orwell as if he would have supported them. Orwell was in that era frequently misrepresented as a right-wing voice by publications like *Encounter*, but he was a socialist who had been literary editor of Aneurin Bevan's *Tribune*. I wrote a reply that *The Australian* published in which I pointed out that Orwell had stated he believed the preferable political system was democratic socialism, and I added that he would have opposed the Vietnam War. Knopfelmacher withdrew at that point, but Jones picked up on some reference I'd made to the pair having political lives and he suggested I'd been exaggerating by attributing one to him. I took away from this a confirmation that the disingenuous right-wing sometimes like to categorise themselves and their work as apolitical. A few years later, when I was campaigning for the Labor Party, I wasn't surprised that it was always obvious that anyone who told you they weren't interested in politics was going to vote conservative. The stance, of course, echoes again the recommendation from the CIA's John



Maury's AEDINOSAUR memo about Pasternak: that 'political passivity' is 'fundamental' to the cause.

In regard to U.S. Intelligence and Vietnam, I had an interesting encounter when I was twenty one. A Macquarie university friend of mine who had recently been an American exchange student was exchanging letters with a young man who was a Military Intelligence Officer in Vietnam. He was on R&R and she was driving him to her parents home in Orange, dropping me off at Penrith on the way. During that hour or so, he and I had a lively but amicable conversation. He confided that he had chosen to serve for a year in Vietnam because the alternative was two years in Berlin gaol. He and a couple of girls had got drunk and exploded a mine at the Berlin Wall with empty strawberry wine bottles. I would soon use him as a partial inspiration for the character of the M.I. in my long poem *The Problem of Evil*. When I was in the car, however, I was writing a short story set in New Guinea, with a political context, and I described it to him. His response was fascinating. Within minutes, he had worked out several intricate plot twists and character scenarios involving secret identities, duplicity and false allegiances. They were suited to the spy thriller genre, not the short story I was writing, but I've never forgotten how that Intelligence-trained mind snapped into mode so enthusiastically and with such astonishing complexity. Every now and then I still try to view some political mystery or anomaly as if it were being explained - or maybe organised - by a cognition like that belonging to the M.I. in the car.

Given the obsession of the Intelligence services with prizes, I think he would have relished the increasing abundance of prizes and professorships with mysterious but well-crafted origins. There is wonderful whimsy and pathos in imagining so many deathbeds of devoted married couples, independent old ladies and promising young critics who horrify their relatives with an unexpected last-minute decision to set up a trust fund for Australian literature. They clearly have a taste for drama at the different Companies and one wonders if they had fun acting out the last gasps of these literary benefactors and the stunned expressions of the disappointed families: 'But, Uncle Wolfgang, you've never even *read* an Australian novel...' That is not to say, of course, that the actual recipients of such honours should not be respected, or should reject them.

One of the interesting anomalies in Australian academic literary studies at present is the financial discouragement of the reading of literature (eliminating the Chair in Australian Literature at Sydney, or minimising U.W.A. Press, for example) but the increased funding of student or staff



academic Creative Writing. Again, there are political re-definitions and repositionings involved. The creation of a canon of 'necessary' literary works, whether the criteria are adjudicated by Leavis, Frye, Bloom or some other, was originally seen as a proscriptive conservative hierarchical move but was always seeded by its own dissent. For literary and ethical reasons, portions of each canon were anti-hierarchical, and it was these that had the most unpredictable energy. In funding them, the right-wing was on less safe ground than in funding individual creative writing. Whilst Salusinszky seems to have become expert on Frye because of Frye's influential insistence that there was a necessary continuing biblical element in literary tradition - thus explicating writers like Blake as rational in their terms of reference - Frye was then also able through Blake and his tradition to internalise some deeply iconoclastic perspectives. There is no reason to think that the Canadian Frye's consequent anti-Vietnam and anti-Apartheid activities (spied upon by the fixated Mounties) were anything but genuine.

For the right-wing, however, there is a use of the obsessive-compulsive in their funding to isolate the individual writer from a full literary context, often with the insinuation that the writer's unique creativity will be contaminated by too much knowledge of others. There seems no doubt, anyway, that one of their desirable criteria is that writers have an apparent tendency to introspect and self-isolate, although that can need to be balanced by biography hastily - hence the puzzled commentator on a betting site who had been informed that one reputed Australian Nobel Prize candidate was a very reclusive bartender.

Even apart from the difficulties of ordering a drink in *that* bar, the left-wing is always perplexed by the right-wing's monumental lack of logic, and by how little that matters sometimes. But the logic is that of a decade-long chess game and includes many self-contradictory and lateral moves, like those suggested by the M.I. in the car. One remembers Les Murray's line about Europe finding that 'nothing not founded on the irrational can stand'. There is a despair, an élan, a desperation, an indifference in Intelligence operatives - or they are accustomed addicts to something, part of the old-fashioned concept of 'addictive personality' still being used in some recruiting. And even that assumes simple recruiting, and we are discussing a much wider sphere of sympathies than espionage as such.

Because of the Ern Malley hoax, Australians tend to assume that the right-wing will oppose experimental or 'obscure' writing, and that representational literature will tend to be right-wing - a premise perpetuated by right-wing commentators, including Les Murray and in





*Quadrant*. The effect of the Malley hoax, however, was again to disparage literature as such. No matter how haunting 'I am still the black swan of trespass on alien waters' may be, attempts to re-appropriate 'Malley's work as some of James McAuley's and Harold Stewart's best writing (which it is) haven't resonated in the same way as has their own conspiratorial contempt.

Often, of course, conflicts in Australian poetry can be presented as more stylised. In that late Sixties period I was describing earlier, *The Australian* attempted to do that with poetry debating the Vietnam War. I remember some nervous headline such as 'The Battle of the Poets' (one of those writing against the war was the schoolteacher and fine representational poet Bruce Dawe). Since it was still unpopular to criticise the war at that time, this was probably as much an attempt to normalise the possibility of the debate as it was to excite interest in poetry. But the subject matter was too serious for any ongoing readership to be able to treat it as an enjoyable ruse, like the 1892-93 *Bulletin* debate between Paterson and Lawson.

What must be considered before any analysis of the Paterson-Lawson exchange is the nature of the ballad form. Since the early border ballads, it has always depended on a rhythmical reassuring structure and a deliberately surprising message, whether as a cruel (Lord Randal has been poisoned) or kind (the pregnant Janet does rescue her lover Tam Lin) plot twist, or an unexpected world view. The skilled journalist Kipling made shrewd use of this - Gunga Din *is* a better man than the brutal but comprehending soldier who addresses him, Judy O'Grady and the Colonel's Lady *are* sisters under the skin, the female of the species *is* usually deadlier, there *is* 'neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, when two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth' and there *are* 'nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays, and every single one of them is right' - or at least there ought to be.

The ballad is a powerfully subversive form. As an experienced writer, Henry Lawson was foremost a great technician, always preoccupied with the best choice of literary form for his subjects. He realized the potential of the ballad as mock debate, and suggested this to Paterson, as a means of continuing their publication by the *Bulletin*, enjoying themselves, making a little money, and incidentally allowing a wider audience for Lawson's socialist perspective on the many aspects of poverty and deprivation in the bush. Paterson always acknowledged that Lawson had much more unprotected experience of the bush than he, and Paterson's counterpoints are like those of a vigorous barrister defending the bush as if it were a client who needs a fair bit of explaining and excusing, the



performance culminating in stylised insults to the professional opposition. Paterson himself, although conservative, was usually true to the ballad form in presenting the bush as an iconoclastic and equalising arena, often with a robust, ruthless humour that would have appealed to his wiry but well-read country readers. The *Bulletin* editor, Archibald, had a firm belief in Lawson's talent, and Lawson's idea for the poetic debate was very suited to Archibald's concept of the paper's republicanism and radicalism. The readership had enough literary experience, too, to understand the terms of the contract. It wouldn't have mattered to most of them that Paterson's first response to Lawson ('So you're back from up the country, Mr. Lawson, where you went...') had a feeling of cheerful contrivance rather than spontaneity.

The debate was only a year or so long, and, since it was designed and monitored by Lawson, did no damage to any left-wing viewpoint, in fact presenting two of them. Lawson had charmed Paterson with the irreverent plan that they could continue the debate until someone stopped them - but no one did, least of all Archibald, and at a certain point they simply ran out of things about which to argue.

In contrast, it is the audience and artist not understanding the terms of the contract which is one of the more dangerous aspects in conservative manipulation of art. I would like to discuss that next.

Later, this essay will also try to consider the different issue of the *Bulletin's* racism. Paradoxically, my grandfather, with half Indian blood and born in India, was a NSW country headmaster who was always a devoted *Bulletin* reader, and that particular *Bulletin* problem demands consideration, including in terms of its conflicting strands.

Regarding contracts, however, it is time to begin considering the uses of copyright and pulping in the conservative contempt for - or use of - art. There is the wider issue, of course, of unwritten emotional contracts between publishers, artists and audience, but microcosms inside this process are also illuminating. There are different ways in which publishers exercise control over authors. For example, they can buy complete and permanent copyright on an individual work. Grace Perry would do this for the publishing house she owned, South Head Press. She was proud of this decision. I remember her perceptive and concerned friend Margaret Diesendorf quoting Grace's triumphant declaration: 'I own Bruce Beaver!'. Grace was very fond of Bruce as a person, and was one of his medical doctors at the time. She had made sound decisions to assist his health, and to some extent it must have seemed to her that as a publisher she was only acting in his best interests. But that aristocratic



benevolence was not the case in regard to my poetry collection, *For the Left Hand*, which she published in 1981 as issue 78 of *Poetry Australia*. She bought complete and endless copyright from me for \$500.00. Distributed with the issue was the first booklet of poems I had edited from workshops I'd conducted for Blacktown Council in Sydney's Western Suburbs, and which had been printed by that Council. Of course, I ensured that all copyright on poems by workshop participants remained with the authors, but in my own case I remember Grace's confident tone and grim humour when she suggested that if I didn't like the terms of my contract I should consult a solicitor. She hadn't known that my husband-at-the-time was a young solicitor, and neither did her own solicitor, the admirable poet John Millett. The two solicitors arranged better terms for me than would have happened otherwise, but Grace wouldn't budge on her demand for full perpetual copyright. She got it. At the time, I had great optimism about my production capacity, and thought it would be worth my losing one book in order to have the book and the workshop booklet so well distributed. Later, before she killed herself, she left everything to do with her publishing to Millett, whom she could have known would return all copyright to the original authors. After her death, he returned *For the Left Hand* to me with no problems. So I'm left with the copyright and a sense of the deep pathos in the trapping microcosm, whether the actor is powerful or powerless. Grace was conservative in her social beliefs in the superiority of academic prowess, and in her belief in the benefit of some forms of eugenics - she was proud that she bred better cattle than her peers, including those owned by the ex-Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. She took her truck out at dawn herself to artificially inseminate the cows. Maybe this is the same feeling that possessing other people's copyright engenders in an owner. I have, myself, desired many things, and can understand the appetite for jewellery, clothes, ornaments or real estate, but - despite its obvious pleasure in power - the appeal in accumulating other copyrights needs more explanation.

As we are discussing the power that exists within a microcosm, it is well known that it is the first moments of hope that are the most dangerous in terms of potential suicide: like the increase of suicides in cold climates at the start of spring. There is a catharsis in recognising that one was included helplessly in a power structure stronger than that visible around one. Perhaps Grace experienced this when her trust in a benign literary benefactor, the Literature Board - and by extension, the Government - was disappointed. I'm remembering that phrase from Robert Graves about his experiences in the First World War: 'so tense with hope the tears run down.' It is a deadly business. I like to think, however, that finally it was



Grace, not just the wise John Millett, who gave *For the Left Hand* back to me.

Possession is often married to destruction, and another anomaly in a publisher's rigid possession of copyright on books can be the furtive pulping of them. Recently on a Twitter page, one newly published writer brought up the subject of pulping, and whether other writers knew publishers did it, and how often. Before the discussion was underway, it was snuffed by a comment that publishing paper was ecologically wrong, anyway, so one shouldn't complain if one's books were destroyed. Power has often thus misused ecology to control a discussion.

My own experience of pulping has been of two kinds: consensual and non-consensual. The consensual were normal enough. At a certain point some publishers decided that the leftover books would no longer sell, so offered to sell me copies at a reduced rate and pulped any I didn't wish to purchase. This process might be even less nihilistic and expensive for the publisher, as sometimes the books then tended to turn up in mint condition anyway in op-shops: the poor man's pulper.

My books have been pulped nonconsensually twice, and both those times were peculiar and in need of attention here, as I'd like to understand them better. The first occurred when my daughter was a child, I was parenting her and suffering from double pneumonia, separated from my second husband (not the lawyer), and earning my living by writing and conducting workshops. The publisher of my first Australian *Selected Poems* told me that it had sold out, and that they weren't reprinting it, even though it was set for the NSW Higher School Certificate. I was startled, as I hadn't had the opportunity to buy any author's copies after the first handful when it was published. In a sort of pneumonic, tortured, guttural squeak, I managed on the phone to alert their Sales officer that I'd like to buy any return copies they received from bookshops. She agreed, sounding nervous, over-explanatory and over-apologetic, as if my vocal tone was related to their decision not to re-print. They sent royalty statements after that saying the returns were being pulped in scores, but they sent no author's copies. I regained my copyright a few years later, but I'm not sure if I was dealing with a then-deliberate publishing policy that an ex-book not be returned to its author in case it re-enter the market in some manner beyond the control of the publisher. Certainly, the effect on authors would have been intrinsically depressing and dis-empowering.

I should add that the publisher did then publish another of my books, but it was remaindered normally and I bought some copies. I remember the book's editor, Judith Rodriguez, was concerned that I didn't buy all of



those remaindered copies, and so she bought the rest herself as an 'investment', telling me that she'd always have them for me if I wanted them. She was a remarkable woman.

The second non-consensual pulping was only a few years ago. I'd been worried that my publishers - to whom I felt deeply devoted - were explicitly anxious financially, while at the time my books with them were winning large financial prizes. I offered to pay my way with publishing expenses and they accepted, giving the amount as \$3,000. I devised a means of making this even better by offering the money in terms of buying back copies of my works, and I even sent a \$3,000 cheque, which wasn't cashed. I'd been told by others of their authors that the publishers wanted to 'make space', so I thought my offer would solve those two problems. The publishers, however, announced at my last book launching with them that they would no longer publish my work, and later acknowledged that the decision was political, but with the explanation that it was the political attitude of the readers who weren't buying my work that was the political factor - not they, the publishers. Afterwards, they told me that they had pulped books in the month before my book launching, and said: 'On the 13 March 2017, at the insistence of my distributors, I ordered a comprehensive pulping of titles in order to reduce what they call 'overstocks'...I ordered the pulping of 5450 copies, including 200 copies of *Drones and Phantoms*.'

Even though I had sent the cheque, I was not informed about the pulping, or offered any opportunity to buy the condemned books beforehand. The reason for this may have been the clause in the publisher's contract which stated the publisher retained copyright as long as they had 50 copies of the book in stock. At any rate, the pulping was only disclosed when I had left the publisher and my solicitor had regained my copyright. To be certain of that copyright, I purchased any copies left of my works from the publisher, and this time the cheques were cashed. There were very few *Drones and Phantoms*. It would seem that authors of the other 5,250 pulped books should have been aware of their copyright position. Perhaps they were. Anyhow, slightly earlier, I'd been naive enough to assume the missing *Drones and Phantoms* might have been given away as publicity because it won the 2014 ALS Gold Medal, but the publishers informed me that the ALS Medal wasn't significant as it was organised by academics who didn't publicise it. It probably genuinely isn't important that *Drones and Phantoms* includes poems critical of a former Australian Prime Minister who was later employed by a large U.S. think-tank run by someone in the family of the publishers. We are discussing wider spheres.





Whilst some of the above seems microcosmic, there are some macrocosmic points to be extrapolated from it. The young writer on Twitter was correct to be uneasy about pulping, as it may sometimes deprive writers of buying back their own books, and it may also be a form of retaining copyright by avoiding the expected remaindering processes. Yet another point would be that the retention of copyright for its own sake can be a way of burying or controlling artistic influences, far beyond any personal acquisitiveness such as that of Grace Perry.

Another point might be that there can be no discussion of broader political processes if publishers assume an apolitical stance but attribute anything apolitical or politically safe to market forces. It might be argued that the CIA's Cord Meyer's half century old dictum to 'court the compatible left' also fits that stance very well, as the more mainstream and more sympathetically presented forms of Human Rights and Ecological Protest can acquire cash and numbers from the organisations that court them.

But it is the unease of that young writer on Twitter that haunts one. It is no small or safe thing for someone so young to be treated as a prize mare or gelding, or perhaps a champion greyhound, and then to be discarded and sent to the metaphoric or real slaughter-yard. Even a small prescient smell on the breeze of the blood in the future can be psychologically and physically distorting. And there is a young artist's appalling urge to appear to be consenting. Soon we should look at the emotional contracts established between artists, publishers, promoters and audiences, and the terrible cost of dishonoring those contracts. I'd also like to begin discussing the difference between the Drug and Hippie Culture of the Sixties and the Vietnam Protest movement, and the significance of drugs as an apolitical or conservative force - including MKUltra - and to analyse the concept of artist as addict. And to examine the claim by a recent reviewer of my *brookings: the noun* that the 60s Drug Culture was patriotic freedom of expression rather than a manifestation of conservative political tactics. In regard, too, to the subject of patriotism, I'd like to move on to the Nineteenth Century critic John Ruskin and the development of extreme and careful patriotism through promoting expressionist or innovative art, and to return to the difference between abstract expressionism and left-wing surrealism in the light of stylistic contracts with the viewer. Of course, I should add here that I nevertheless revel in innovative art.

As I was writing this, and to do with Government Arts Funding, the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced that he was going to cut the number of public service departments, and that the current



Department of Communications and the Arts would be included in a new entity called the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. We should discuss that, too, as it underlines the themes of this essay. The purpose of minimising national public funding of the arts is to increase their dependence on private and global capitalism, and to render them easier to control. It isn't to express contempt for them, although the deliberate creation of public contempt for art is a right-wing strategy to make decisions like that of Morrison more acceptable. The creation of munificent capitalist arts-funding bodies like the Copyright Agency may also ultimately undermine the power of art, even if the actual art sponsored is splendid, and the community projects are irresistibly worthwhile, filled with the smiling, grateful visages of poetic schoolchildren, the Indigenous, and impeccable opposers to the extinction of everything from shy marsupials to the polar snow and the earth itself. The fact that the latter activities may also involve an 'emergency' handing over of power to inept global corporate bodies, founded by mysterious NGOs, rather than clear-sighted democratic anti-warming strategies, may not be something as likely to be publicised by cultural funds.

It is interesting that the Copyright Agency has just briefly funded a Chair of Poetry at the University of Technology Sydney. It was given to the excellent and deserving poet Robert Adamson, but the selection panel included a critic - and one of my former publishers - who had also written attacks on a poet who was the target of recent particular 'poetry wars' that Adamson and Anthony Lawrence were perhaps assisted in conducting by this critic's theoretical underpinning. There isn't any suggestion that Adamson was dis-empowered by the professorial process, or that he made the wrong decision in accepting it, but the situation again stresses the need for artists to be aware intensely of the long-term macrocosm in which they work.

Providing a definite macrocosmic philosophy - even if presented in varied discourse - can, however, be in itself a lethal business. This is clear in the case of Ruskin. Ruskin was not a socialist, but he encouraged and defended socialists. Socialists and proponents of workers' and women's welfare have usually admired him. Gandhi, Tolstoy, Frank Lloyd Wright, Arnold Toynbee, Marianne Moore, Wilde and Beveridge - whose report was the basis of the British Welfare State - adored his ideas. Proust used his style as a model for his prose, and this is even more sumptuously evident in Scott-Moncrieff's flowing but precise English Proust translations. Although it cannot be summarised over-strictly, however, Ruskin's view of art in general was that it was intrinsically involved with social ideals and that the artist was the upholder of these, necessitating



that the artist be pure in moral character and scrupulous in accurate observation. He opposed any traditional artistic style or method that might intrude itself between the artist and the direct perception of reality. He was, therefore, the great champion and curator of the work of J.M.W. Turner, and was very comfortable encouraging the Pre-Raphaelites. His ideal society was not of equal citizens but of a co-operative communal hierarchy, where rulers were royally benign and visionary, and the ruled - whether women or working men - were well-educated in science and art, and enjoyed unalienated labour and humanising by leisure. Of the ruled, artists had the special role of perceiving and articulating truth for the rest of their society. When Ruskin finally resigned his Oxford Professorship in 1884, he said it was because of his opposition to vivisection. Despite the hierarchical nature of his beliefs, when I was a girl and joined the Labour Party, he was one of my own heroes, and he remains so.

When Ruskin delivered his 1870 inaugural lecture as Slade Professor of Art at Oxford University, he declaimed: 'There is a destiny now possible to us - the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused.... [W]ill you, youths of England, make your country a royal throne of kings; a sceptered isle for all the world a source of light, a centre of peace...' He then offered a choice between rulers: 'There are the two oriflammes [banners with motivational symbols]; which shall we plant on the farthest islands - the one that floats in heavenly fire, or that hangs heavy with the foul tissue of terrestrial gold?' Unfortunately, this speech not only inspired a generation of egalitarian politicians and artists, but also the 18-year-old Oxford student Cecil Rhodes, who carried a copy of it in longhand and made his own interpretation of it a lifelong mission to empower and extend the British Empire. Not at all repulsed by 'foul... terrestrial gold', he was soon to make his fortune from gold and from diamonds in South Africa.

In 1877, his will already stated that his fortune should be used to form 'a Secret Society, the true aim and object whereof shall be the extension of British rule throughout the world... and especially the occupation by British settlers of the entire Continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the valley of the Euphrates, the Islands of Cyprus and Candia, the whole of South America, the islands of the Pacific not heretofore possessed by Great Britain, the whole of the Malay Archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan, the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British Empire, the consolidation of the whole Empire, and finally the foundation of so great a power as to hereafter render wars impossible and promote the best interests of humanity.'



When the will was made public posthumously, it was initially dismissed as youthful delusions of grandeur, but further historical studies argue that Rhodes did indeed found his society, of which the other members were at first William Stead, Lord Nathaniel Rothschild, Alfred Milner and Lord Reginald Esher, although the numbers grew rapidly before World War One. Powerful aristocrats and King Edward VII became involved. The society was influential in extending and cementing British Colonial rule, and eventually in machinating for World War One, and the merciless Treaty of Versailles, since the Rhodes Society saw Germany as a rival industrial power to be defeated as quickly and decisively as possible. And if the idea of the ultimate recovery of the United States by the British Empire may seem amusing, we should remember that MI6 supervised the establishment of the CIA, and that there is an argument that the Iraq War was thrust upon George Bush by Tony Blair, more than vice versa.

On the subject of the concept of conspiracies, it is evident again from the seductively clandestine Rhodes society that it is the right-wing which is enthralled historically by conspiratorial thought. This is something needing our careful attention, because there is a current right-wing insistence on retaining the power of the phrase 'conspiracy theory'. As I've already mentioned, the phrase came into its own when recommended to the Project Mockingbird press (*Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, television news and so on) by the CIA as a way of discouraging questions about the Kennedy assassination, although it had been used occasionally earlier. One problem for the informed left-wing is that it is hard to take 'conspiracy theorist' seriously these days as an accusation. An anonymous commentator on the internet dismissed it as the CIA's all-purpose 'ass-coverer', and another observed that it seems to be used for anything the speaker thinks is probably true, but wishes wasn't. We should take it seriously, however - just as we should take all the prizes and professorships seriously - because the right-wing does so, as part of their acknowledged long-term strategies. I think the M.I. in the car to Orange would have been very serious indeed about it.

For example, in Australia the candidly right-wing author, editor, ex-Literature Board Chairman on the Australia Council, and Liberal Party publicist Imre Salusinszky has just written a book about the perpetrator of the Hilton Hotel bombing, in which a garbage-collector was killed by a bomb left in a bin. The book is themed around the fact that the murderer was a single individual with an Eastern sectarian indignation, and it emphasises remorse and recovery through the Christian faith. In the process of presenting the work, the author has stressed the error of some of the left-wing at the time who suggested the bombing might have been a blunder by ASIO designed to increase funding. Although the book is no



doubt an inspiring project, part of its function may be to vindicate and perpetuate attacks on general 'conspiracy theories'. Accusation about conspiracy theories is a tool which the right-wing is not eager to lose.

One recent review of my poetry collection *brookings: the noun* by a music journalist has given me an opportunity to discuss such things on many levels here. I like to see my work and its reviews as part of an ongoing conversation, so I offered to discuss his points about *brookings: the noun* with him very amicably - in the manner of the friendly dialogue between myself and Margaret Bennett in the Quemar Press *Workbook of Torture and Trauma Questions* - but he declined. This discussion will be therefore no doubt poorer, but I hope still worthwhile. In a brief reply, however, he did suggest that he may not have been accusing me of conspiracy theories, but only of discussing conspiracy theories. In the review, he does state that he disagrees with me politically, but the full extent and nature of that disagreement isn't defined. That lack of definition is disappointing, and it might have been explicated in the broader conversation. One vitally engrossing strand in his review, however, disagrees with my theme that there was a dangerous dichotomy in the 1960s between the Popular Music Culture and the political Vietnam Protest Movement. The former were ubiquitous, often apolitical or politically vague - soothingly politically generalised - and were also often the offspring of powerful figures in the Military-Industrial complex. There was a strong and preachy connection between them and drugs, at a time when the CIA was funded by drug money and was experimenting with drugs and mind control in Project MKUltra. As an example of this, one of my poems mentioned the apolitical musician Jim Morrison, whose father was the Admiral who completely invented an incident that was used as the grounds for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the escalation of the Vietnam War. The reviewer outlines the junior Morrison's career and adds that he committed suicide. As always, I would have liked to suggest that some suicides may possibly be averted by an increased understanding of the political macrocosm.

The reviewer is particularly interesting in arguing that the drug culture was an expression of patriotic social liberty, that it defended the American Constitution, and that this is shown by films such as *Easy Rider*. Although the reviewer has an independent perspective, that would clearly have been the rationale from certain sections of the CIA, too. There is no reason to suggest that men like Cord Meyer, or the Dulles brothers, weren't idealistic patriots. Even Sydney Gottlieb, aka 'Dr Death', the chemist who ran MKUltra, and experimented - including in prisons and hospitals - with torture, hypnosis, LSD and electric shocks whilst devising numerous assassinations, has to be acknowledged as being





patriotic. A recent book about him by Stephen Kinzer disingenuously accepts their word that at the last Gottlieb and the CIA concluded that all the experiments were tragic failures and not worth continuing. In another context, I've always rejoiced that when Mandy Rice-Davies was told that a politician in the Profumo scandal had denied her revelations, she grinned, 'Well, he would, wouldn't he?'. What if Kinzer had actually added that the CIA acknowledged their mind-control was a huge success and pleasure, and that they still couldn't get enough of it?

It is interesting that many of Gottlieb's CIA colleagues were ex-Nazis who had experimented on Jews. In passing, too, one should probably recall again here that Sylvia Plath's poetry has a much wider context than her domestic life, and that the Project Mockingbird press has always focused purposefully on the domestic and pathological in any art that could be powerful. But 'It was... the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs', and that is what *The Bell Jar* is about, just as poems about Nazis and Americans are about Nazis and Americans.

In terms of the right-wing taste for conspiracy, it should be noted that for a century the United States Council on Foreign Relations - confirmed by Wikileaks to be the most powerful force in American politics - has had the motto 'Ubique', and an ambition for universal ubiquity. Regarding family connections, such as those of the Morrisons, it should also be noted that the Council seems to have a policy, rather like the Mafia, of tactically including and caring for family members - the Bushes, Clintons and so on. In my most recent collection, *The Espionage Act*, my little hybrid marsupial character, Brookings, likes to hear me reading about various United States institutions and he enjoys acting out their mission statements. He has great fun crashing furrily all over the bushland being ubiquitous:

'he is rolling, bouncing and sprawling his way  
through the bush like a plump drone dodging a laser:  
ubiquity, if with that self-aware  
energy observable in a baby or a joey.'

One of my purposes in using little Brookings, partly inspired by the Brookings Institution, as a device in these poems is to affirm that my attitude is discerning and understanding, not shocked by conspiracy. It is important that the accusation of believing in conspiracy theories doesn't cling to an artist, as it diminishes stature. There is no need for the artist to be revered, but Ruskin was right about the social need to preserve the status of the artist. So we will discuss the political problems in defining artists by pathology or addiction, whether the pathology is directly inflicted - as Paul Robeson's son argues convincingly was the case with



Robeson and CIA drug poisoning in Moscow and London - or caused by severe emotional and social circumstances.

As with the Opium Wars between Britain and China, addicting the colonised or the controlled population to narcotics has often been a lucrative and powerful means to expand empires. And it can always be argued that it is part of the freedom of will of an individual to choose to become or remain addicted. There is no consideration in that argument about the extreme physical exigencies of addiction. At a certain point the withdrawal can become more immediately painful or lethal than the drug. Withdrawal-related deaths such as those of Amy Winehouse or Brett Whiteley reinforce fears in an addict. Once fear is present, there is less philosophical choice possible. This includes not just physical fear, but fear of depression, suicide and meaninglessness without drugs. Fear cuts off access to the macrocosm where the causes for predicaments can be understood and choices can be made. It is a lethal business.

In the control of art, the first priority of right-wing manipulators is to remove philosophical choice. Whilst current health professionals tend to dismiss the concept of 'addictive personality' as invalid, there is no doubt that intelligence agencies have always been obsessed with it, sometimes making it an important factor in recruiting. Even without direct recruiting, the recommendation and dissemination of drugs in a society by any Intelligence Agency is an effort to subdue and denigrate the critical faculty. In right-wing reasoning, there is a conceptual association between fidelity, reliability, predictability and the lack of critical faculty. And when drug-taking causes public instability, it is also to be used by the right-wing in the cause of denigrating the status of the artist. To me, the most interesting things about the writer Dylan Thomas were his precise analytical tone, his pointed humour, his use of lyricism to overturn concepts, and his enthusiasm for Welsh socialism and Aneurin Bevan. This was reciprocated by Bevan (and later by the finally left-wing Jimmy Carter), who quoted him in his manifesto, *In Place of Fear*: 'After the first death there is no other', to illustrate the uniqueness of personal identity. The Mockingbird Press has always presented Thomas patronisingly as a colourful and talented alcoholic, if occasionally, should it suit their purposes, a 'genius' (dangerous word: let the left-wing beware of it). There is no doubt that the American literary environment pressured him towards his alcoholic tendencies, catered for them, and emphasised them - rather than his political belief - once he had died (of an accidental morphine over-prescription) in its midst.

To digress a little, another interesting feature of the concept of fidelity in espionage circles is the idea of the perpetual spy. Many spy thrillers



(usually written by less-than-thrilling 'ex' spies) depend on that plot focus on 'sleepers' and double, triple (the M.I. in the car to Orange would probably have come up with at least ten) allegiances. These books, of course, are always microcosmic: there can be twists and turns within the field of patriotism, but there is never any envisaging of permanent choices outside it. Some improbable Russian honeytrap may be converted by capitalist sex, but Smiley isn't going to retrench to the Russians. Nor, unlike Kipling's *Kim* (one of the first and best modern spy novels), is there any real possibility for the trapped tricky innocent to escape to a higher metaphysical plain.

In this aspect, the works and life of Graham Greene resemble the world of Kipling, not le Carré and Company. I have wanted for years to discuss the thesis by a journalist writing for the Australian magazine *Heat* that Greene's left-wing statements (including in favour of Castro's Cuba) were invalid as he was uttering them as a current British spy. The effect was to attempt to discredit Greene's often-stated left-wing political positions. Greene had certainly worked for British Intelligence in the Second World War, and possibly before that. I believe he was recruited by his sister, and that there was never anything nefarious about it. Indeed, his then fellow agent Malcolm Muggeridge often commented that - considering the works of the two ex-agents Ian Fleming and Greene - Greene's *Our Man in Havana* was the only accurate description he had read of MI6. Whilst Greene may have been amused to accept funding from any established British institution, it would have been a gigantic own-goal, even for MI6, to encourage him to make statements and create novels to explain and promote left-wing causes. No information that could have been gained by lulling left-wing governments would have been worth that cost to right-wing propaganda. If one looks at the litmus-test of manipulations for the Nobel Prize, it is obvious, too, that there was zealous right-wing pressure against Greene receiving it. There seems to be always a useful *in vino veritas* about the history of the Nobel. It is like the favourite football match of spy agencies, at least in the desperate barracking.

The essence of Greene's plots is macrocosmic: the spy or the lover or the priest transcends the microcosm of trickery and violence to attain the higher sphere of idealism, humanity, humour and transcendence, in death, as in *The Power and the Glory*, or in life, as in the glorious *Our Man in Havana*. In the same way, Kipling's orphan *Kim*, 'the poorest of the poor', is recruited and educated for the British cause in 'The Great Game' against the Russians in Afghanistan in the late Nineteenth Century, and he spies efficiently and dutifully, but finally chooses instead to remain with his mentor, the lama, who has realized that the river of enlightenment is in the plains not the mountains. It is the possibility of this transcendence



that is left-wing. There is no possibility that any reader of *Kim* would have believed that Kipling thought the Great Game a worthwhile ending, any more than a reader of Greene could believe that he was still embroiled inescapably with MI6.

To return to the subject of politics and addiction, I have begun trying to work out a little the nature of the group of Australian poets who were considered new and experimental here in the late Sixties and in the Seventies. I did not move in their social circle, although occasionally I visited it, and was often thought to be one of them. Two among the poets I thought most overtly left-wing in public matters such as opposing the Vietnam War and opposing Conservative Governments were Martin Johnston and John Forbes, and both were said to have died eventually from addiction: Forbes to cough mixture and Johnston to alcohol as such. As with Dylan Thomas - and indeed Malcolm Lowry - the residual persona may now be more about the addiction than the politics. It would be good to examine Johnston and Forbes politically next.

*Death by Persona* was an essay I wrote in *Australian Book Review*, April, 1999, for the excellent editor Helen Daniel, who was to die a year or so later of depression and grief for a lost partner, ultimately unable to find enough consolation in the immediate literary sphere, although I remember a conversation in which we agreed that work does give distraction. *Death by Persona* was the first time I used my phrase 'Poor men don't belong in rich men's houses' and it was an aside in my commenting on the work of John Forbes. My essay itself discussed my own work, and that of John Forbes, Les Murray and Vicki Viidikas. The thesis was that the adoption of a persona destroys an artist. Viidikas' close friend and admiring editor, Kerry Leves, told me that he felt my observations about her were very accurate, and his introduction to his new Transit Lounge edition of her work says:

'Jennifer Maiden commented in *Australian Book Review* that Vicki's prose "was limpid and disciplined, with a more private, exploratory ontology than most of her poetry"... In the same article Jenny Maiden also opined that Vicki was "over-defined early as the wayward, kind-hearted, promiscuous druggie Valda in Michael Wilding's prose"; but Michael's "Valda" - an uncannily accurate mimesis of Vicki's vocal cadences, of the way she spoke - didn't seem to bother the model. When I tried to quiz her about "Valda", Vicki shrugged - writing was (is) an open field.'

Nevertheless, Leves stressed to me that he felt that this excitingly pre-established persona had been very problematic in her life. The issue is



not with the actual depiction of a fictional persona outside the writer's self, but with the writer's insecure need to internalise it, continue to be imprisoned by it and continue to project it. This is linked closely to the problem of ambition. The starting point of the *Death by Persona* essay was the explanation to me by Bruce Sims, the Literary Editor at Penguin, that they could not publish my novel *Complicity* because they would need to market me as an authorial personality. In the actual conversation, this was too much for my sense of humour, and I assumed my best little-girl-bewildered tone and demurred in a small voice: 'But I *have* a personality!...' whereupon Sims picked up on the comic nature of the discourse and began reassuring me, 'Yes, of *course* you have a personality...' But it was a serious issue, and I treated it like that in the essay, where I stated that I would do many things to have that manuscript published, but for me to assume a publicity persona wasn't one of them.

In the essay, I then described how John Forbes had told me that he was desperate for academic work, and that he would 'walk over broken glass' to obtain a position that was currently available at the then University of Western Sydney. Forbes seemed to spend much time in the houses of more well-off writers who were preoccupied often by matters such as real estate. In the piece I argued that unrealistic ambitions and the need to establish a persona to achieve them were destructive in his life. Apart from the thesis in the essay, the persona of yearning to achieve difficult goals was also reflected in his delineating at least two well-known female literary figures as illusive beloveds. In one conversation with me, he explained that, when he was younger, he had wanted to emulate the success of Peter Porter in London. His tone had such self-disgust about it that it was clear that he wished to disown that aspiration. Knowing that Porter had written a particularly vicious review of my *The Problem of Evil* in *The Australian* (including suggesting that I had been misled by my friends into thinking I could write), Forbes' remarks were also deliberately defining himself to me as possessing an integrity and a literary standard.

It is clear that Forbes' substance-addiction was not the manifestation of a directly right-wing created persona, like that of Jackson Pollock. The suicidal depression in substance addiction of some left-wing artists, however, seems to me clearly related to their internalisation of right-wing social pressures to succeed, and an inability to disentangle those pressures from their valuation of their art - and, indeed, their lives. It is a lethal business. The nature of competition and criticism in capitalist art has the characteristics of a battlefield, and drugs can seem the only method to tolerate it. There appears to the artist no issue of long-term survival, only a short-term negotiation and acceptance of the microcosm. Drugs provide





the conflicting comforts of temporary transcendence, tunnel-vision and indifference all at once. They are a short-cut to the creation of the type of intoxicated persona that the right-wing insists is the hallmark of art. And they also destroy the artist's own critical faculty, making the artist more dependent on external right-wing critical criteria.

The destruction of the individual critical faculty is an interesting subject in itself. In the first stage of an artistic creation suppressing the critical faculty can be very useful in increasing confidence and undermining conceptual inhibitions, but in the next stage there is loss of ability to correct and develop the work, and to place it in a wider social context. The initial conceptual inhibitions that need to be overcome are often socially-inflicted. It might be argued that right-wing artistic forces create arenas of steeplechasing where it is necessary for the artist to risk damage and death in a charge at artificial barriers. Whilst Forbes had an acute perception of the nature of right-wing forces in national and party politics, I'm not sure if he was sufficiently aware of their influence in his own life. Seeing beyond the microcosm to the macrocosm doesn't necessarily involve surviving by cinching the two together.

The other literary figure analysed in the *Death by Persona* essay was Les Murray, and I was wary of the conservative, 'mystic right-wing of the country party' persona he had inhabited. I remembered that he had told me his mother always called him 'Leslie', and in the essay I suggested that it would disinhibit his work if the 'Les' persona were abandoned in favour of work by Leslie, the man.

The *Death by Persona* essay did not consider Martin Johnston, who it seems to me necessary now to discuss. Johnston was the son of the writers Charmian Clift and George Johnston. His mother had pushed the Overton Window enormously to the left by writing a very popular column for the *Sydney Morning Herald* Women's Section and opposing in it the Vietnam War and the Colonels' Coup in Greece. Both parents were famous and fine writers. They had lived lengthily and very publicly in Greece and Martin was brought up there. When I met him, Martin had already been a cadet reporter on the *SMH*, and had a persona as his parent's even more left-wing, poetic son. He wrote a memorable program for ABC radio on the Klephts, fierce pre-Nineteenth Century Greek hillsmen who fought the Ottoman Empire, and that was clearly where his heart lay.

When I met him, both his parents were dead. Carl Harrison-Ford had sent me an enthusiastic review of my work Martin had written in a university newspaper, where he asked if it were illegal for a poet to think, placing



me on the same 'shelf' as John Tranter, and declaring 'Jennifer Maiden, I love you, whoever you are...'. I took this statement to mean he thought I was writing under a pseudonym (a lot of people did then), but I suspect it was a source of embarrassment to him when I turned out to be real, female and about a year younger than he was. We were both at a meeting of the Poetry Society (my first) and he unexpectedly nominated me for an office in it. I didn't win. At that point, he was part of the movement that championed experimental art over representational (writing in one review: 'if you want to communicate, use a telephone') but there were always qualifications to that if an artist's movement towards clarity or simplicity involved an improvement in quality or a refreshing of direction. I remember him telling me eagerly how Borges' final writings had left the labyrinths and returned to the simple plots and settings of the Argentinian countryside. Borge's complexities tended to support and be supported by the right-wing, of course, and that may have been a factor in Johnston welcoming the change.

My second memory of meeting him is that we were both sitting on a carpet (which had been borrowed from David Malouf) at the Tranters' house. He offered me a drink from his flask, which someone had given him at a party, and which he thought contained a mixture of alcoholic spirits. This confirmed for me his recklessness regarding alcohol, as I had already heard several stories about him being alcoholic, even though he was only twenty two. He was forty two when he died of alcoholism, beloved by his family and friends, and having produced some admirable and unique works of poetry and prose, and some brilliant translations of unlikely foreign movies for SBS. I remember hearing an idea among his friends that they thought it would have been better if his intellect and talent had found what they considered a more suitable setting overseas, and he did spend some time in post-Colonels Greece, but there really didn't seem any home for him but Australia. Despite his deep grief for his parents, and, therefore, his internalising their addiction, it seems to me that there is a basic political element in his destruction. He died in 1990, when the right-wing power structures had taken some pains to convince society that political art was obsolete, the Vietnam War was long over, and that they had no intention of unleashing the decades of invasion, colonialism and chaos they were already planning for the following year. There were always inklings, though, smaller exercises in power and international plunder. And among artists there was a subliminal defeated unease, apparently without meaning. It was hard then to connect the impending lethal macrocosm to the personal malaise. That sort of mystifying and frustrating artistic and political confinement would have destroyed a man with the heart of a Klepht, lengthily and insidiously.



Selfishly, I regret that he died before my more explicitly political volumes of prose and poetry, starting with *Acoustic Shadow* were published. I think he would have much liked them, as Forbes did. On the subject of artistic mood in 1991, I remember a correspondence I had with the dying Barrett Reid, then still editor of *Overland*. He had expressed deep depression about the Gulf War, because he accepted that Saddam Hussein was simply the villain, and he was not seeing any alternative to it. I responded that Saddam did not have any expansive ideology and that the way to avoid depression was to oppose the war. He was open to my attitude, and signed one of his letters 'Warm Wishes from this Wintergarden'.

To return to the subject of Greece, I have been thinking again of Sophocles' play about Philoctetes. Because of its Sophoclean poignant problem-solving, it was one of my favourites when I was a girl. In it, the hero has been abandoned on the island of Lemnos on the way to the Trojan War because of a noxious and putrescent wound in his heel. He has with him the bow and arrow of the deified hero Heracles. Under torture, one of those ubiquitous prophetic Trojan royals, related to Cassandra, reveals that the Greeks need the bow and arrow. They arrive at Lemnos and Odysseus deceives Philoctetes out of the weapons, but Diomedes insists that Philoctetes still comes, too. Heracles descends from Olympus and says that Philoctetes must accompany them and will be healed by the son of the doctor Asclepius. Philoctetes is cured and fights well in the Trojan War. As it is written by the sophisticated Sophocles (there were other non-extant plays about the story) Philoctetes is a prototype for the isolated, depressed and disparaged artist who is finally acknowledged to be necessary and is redeemed by his usefulness. Sophocles suggests that it is this scenario we should desire for the pathologised artist, not the authoritarian right-wing one in which the artist is destroyed by his affliction.

Since Elizabeth Warren is in the current news for suggesting Bernie Sanders is a misogynist (as erroneous as calling Jeremy Corbyn a racist, but if that was efficacious, the right-wing must think that this could work, too), it would be useful if we look next at the Feminist literary microcosm and its macrocosmic dimensions, including the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Christine de Pizan, the Twentieth Century Pankhursts and the Tasmanian Cassandra Pybus.

My only remembered encounter with Cassandra Pybus was when I was part of a panel discussing the Sixties at a Sydney Writers' Festival. It was chaired by Professor Tulip and some writers who had begun publishing in the Sixties were on the panel. Part of the discussion was my poem, *The*



*Problem of Evil*, and, of course, there was much about the Vietnam War. Halfway through, Cassandra Pybus came and sat on the edge of the platform, declaring angrily that the death rate from backyard abortions was much higher than that of the Vietnam War. The panel agreed and acknowledged her point, not to seem anti-Feminist or in favour of backyard abortions, but I remember thinking afterwards that her statistic must be confined to the death rate of Australian soldiers, and not the vast numbers of Vietnamese, or even American, dead.

In terms of submitting to her *Tasmanian Review* magazine (later to become *Island*), in the Nineties I had heard she liked long poems, so I sent her a long one I'd written against the Iraq War. I received a curt response rejecting it and saying she didn't want long poems. There was no expression of opposition to the war. Later, I learned she had written a book about the Hobart Sparkes Orr case, arguing that Professor Orr was guilty of the charges of molesting a student, and should have been dismissed. The full background to the case, of course, is that the Professor previously had been actively involved in anti-authoritarian activities at the University, which might have been very happy to have a reason to dismiss him. That was why so many other academics were indignant about his dismissal, not that they thought he should have *Droit du seigneur* over his classes.

It is very important in Feminist tactics that we do not focus entirely on the microcosm and therefore inadvertently or even advertently become manipulated by a misogynist, militarist, right-wing macrocosm. There was an example of this in 2018, when the sisters Kate and Rozanna Lilley exposed sexual abuse in their childhood. The right-wing Press immediately distorted their courage into an attack on left-wing values, including those of their mother, Dorothy Hewett. I tried to rectify this in Fairfax's 2018 Best Books column, when I wrote:

'Kate Lilley's *Tilt* and Rozanna Lilley's *Do Oysters Get Bored* were unforgettable in accomplished styles and subject, including discussing early sexual abuse. Far from feeling denigrated, their mother, Dorothy Hewett, would have been proud of them. Their courage and great lucidity come from her forthright values.' Both the Lilley sisters expressed approval of my comment - Rozanna in emails, Kate by putting it on her Facebook page - and hopefully the media focus went back to depicting the larger pattern of misogynist exploitation the sisters were revealing.

Whilst the sexual and Feminist issues in the Lilley example can be disentangled easily, as above, there are traditionally more complex interwoven strands in sexuality and Feminism. As I've already mentioned,



there was, for example, Christine de Pizan, who was a well-known Fourteenth and Fifteenth-century Feminist writer. She was an ardent Monarchist at the courts of Charles V and Charles VI, and an ally of Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. The *Romance of the Rose* controversy she organised had the purpose of maintaining conservative social values, but more the purpose of raising the status of women and literature. It was also designed to promote her own writing and prolific manuscript production.

Guillaume de Lorris had written the initial and more formal part of the Roman de la Rose allegory c. 1230, and Jean de Meun wrote the second, more controversial part some forty years later. It was about the Meun that Pizan staged her epistolary literary debate, from 1401 to 1405. She took as her queue a treatise by Jean de Montreuil, who was secretary to Charles VI, and Provost of St Peter of Lille, but a humanist. He praised the Meun, especially its use of vernacular poetry, and was supported by Gontier Col, who was another of the King's secretaries, and by Pierre Col, Gontier's brother, who was canon of Notre Dame. When Christine began writing her dissenting letters, she was therefore assuming an anti-authoritarian role, as well as - like any sensible dissenter - claiming to be defending traditional values. She also made sure she had powerful allies, like Gerson.

The humanists replied, but Pizan's argument was that the Meun disparaged women, attributed to them vices and causation of vices, had a vulgar tone and was far too sexually explicit. In all this she showed a disapproval of the vernacular. Her position was to support chastity and courtly love, but her writing showed distrust even of any permutations in the courtly love narrative - such as those of the Twelfth-century Anglo-Norman poet identifying as Marie of France - which allowed for a fulfilled consummation.

The *Rose* controversy did not endanger the participants, but Pizan made sure that it stayed vivid and important in the public mind, even in 1402 assembling all the letters by the participants (*Epistres sur le Roman de la Rose*) and submitting them for judgement to Guillaume de Tignonville, the Provost of Paris, and Queen Isabeau of Bavaria. She also wrote *Dit de la Rose*, a 650-line allegorical poem dedicated to the Duke of Orleans, Charles VI's brother. In the poem, the character Loyalty, tutored by Love, founds a movement, the Order of the Rose. This is based on Charles VI's *Cour Amoureuse* - a masculine group designed to support courtly love literature, honour women and defend them from calumny - but Pizan's Order of the Rose actually provides a central role for women themselves.





Pizan concluded the debate amicably by writing her famous *La cité des Dames* in 1403-1404, depicting virtuous women from French history and the Bible, whilst her ally Gerson wrote sermons on deadly sins, castigating the lust in Meun's *Rose*. Pizan's *The City of Ladies* has continued to have great significance for Feminists. It was in the library of Elizabeth the First of England, and praised by Simone de Beauvoir. In the latter fact, there is an opportunity to glance at that huge subject of sexuality and Feminism in the context of our topic about conservative manipulation of art.

In contrast to Pizan, Beauvoir's texts stress, of course, the importance of women being able to practise and enjoy their sexuality, even if that isn't always socially controlled. I wrote about that aspect of her philosophy in the poem *And God Created Nora Barnacle* from my *Appalachian Fall* collection: '...So what is useful/in me discussing sex last century, except that I've/been thinking about sexual feminism and poverty,/that there is the transformational in that?/Months ago, when I chose/a Moriarty, writing my last novel, I thought/he could look like Curd Jürgens in *And God/Created Woman*, remembering vaguely in him/the complex, corrupt, powerful. Then last week,/I actually watched the movie again. The Jürgens/thing was right, but naturally the film's focus/was on Brigitte Bardot acting out the sexual./This was the performance Beauvoir considered/liberation for then modern Fifties women. Brigitte/is from an institution for orphans, revels/in her own nudity, is seen under a clothesline,/legs and bottom sunlight-smooth beneath/boredom's bourgeois washing. She is not a virgin./Jürgens pursues her but he is too corrupt,/too experienced, too rich for her taste. She/falls in love with a low-pecking order boy, weds/him in bourgeois lace like white tides around them/but has to work through a compulsion for his/businessman brother, while Jürgens explains/one day he himself may have her, when she learns/to want money: sees her as a femme fatale./She isn't. But he may have a taste for the fatal,/thinking at the end that he escapes her, all/stereotyping all and hiding a bullet, so that/her husband won't be arrested. At the end,/she has danced like a grief-frenzied priestess/with a Latin band, been hit by the husband,/which seems to please her: either because/it means he won't shoot her, or because she/wants him braver, like her, or her nerve-tips/crave for the dramatic. They do end up together/going back into the house quite gently (bad news/for his mother) and we remember most perhaps/that she usually had her shoes off, that she walked/on her soft footsoles as rhythmically as Marilyn/Monroe on stilettos, acting sensuality as real/as the downy animals she harbours: for the bunny/is silly, trusting and hungry: not playboy. We /remember also her disinterest in money, luxury/and travel. That is probably what



shocked the French,/who could cope with Proust's Odette, or Colette's/whores. And maybe it is what most pleased/Beauvoir./There is so much power in those natural material/rejections...'

What Beauvoir may have liked especially about the Bardot character is its equating sexual expression with a subversive rejection of capitalist ambitions - the same conclusion arrived at by D.H. Lawrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. I have no doubt that much of the historic government censorship of that novel was because of its powerful anti-capitalist thesis.

The complex cleaving of Feminism between sexual expression and sexual restriction mirrors the complex cleaving of Feminism between authoritarian and anti-authoritarian sympathies. *Diary Poem: Uses of Ethiopia*, a poem from my comprehensively publisher-pulped 2014 collection *Drones and Phantoms*, had as one of its themes the differences between the Pankhursts: 'This art likes doves:/Ethiopian art: stylised starry pastels/stylised flowers, graceful faces, medieval/icons realistic about slender-naped/pastel madonnas with vaguely/self-conscious peaceful visages like/mother doves and like them, too,/aware of complex peripheries,/well-mannered with watchfulness,/still./Two doves touch beaks like a crest/above a profuse painting./Having observed that the unorthodox/feminists who liked my *Complicity*/manuscript did not object to works/being ethically insecure - as is/all my work - and that/some offended feminists who hated/the manuscript were well in favour/of ethical security, well radiated,/hence their fandom for Gillard later,/and having offended a usually/calm editor by trying/to inhabit Abbott interestedly,/I do believe it time/to discuss the difference between Pankhursts./Although feminists,/Emmeline and Christabel supported/World War One and were socially/orthodox. Sylvia, although feminist,/hated World War One,/had a thing with Keir Hardie/and a son with someone Italian,/whom she refused to marry,/to the horror of Emmeline, her mother./The boy/was enthusiastic about his mother/and they survived happily/in Ethiopia after Sylvia supported/that country against Mussolini. Sylvia/was an Ethiopian hero. The feminism/obviously part of that but not/expressed to the point of aborting/a valuable number: her son, or having/too much truck about his father. No wonder/Gillard cut the Single Mothers' money:/anything/to separate a hero from the numbers./A priori,/one knows women's right to abortion, but/men in my observation urge women/to abort somewhat more often than they'd rather./And with whom, then, will we stand/up for Ethiopia? We/are discussing Ethiopia, not famine. Sylvia/wrote a history of Ethiopian art. No doubt/her son in Ethiopia keeps copies. My daughter/the fire tiger just defended me/on a hostile magazine site now given/to ethical self-security. We should not/surrender too many numbers to the need/for perfect



independence, perfect time./I have noticed that dove-chicks feed/differently to some other birds, pecking/open the parental beak for milk,/not waiting gape-mouthed. Ethiopian/art crowds back to me again,/not radiating security smugly, lines/profuse as anxious doves.'

Positionally, one feels that Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst were in the same universe as Christine de Pizan and that Sylvia was in that of Beauvoir. The latter universe can acknowledge the former, but the former is often too wedded to conservative power structures to tolerate the latter. In regard to Pizan, the collaboration with the right-wing Chancellor of the University of Paris interests especially. Again, the subject is very wide, but we should glance at the perpetual role of Universities in attempting to control art.

Rather as we looked at the philosophies of Professor Northrop Frye or Professor Frank Kermode and their social implications, we should look at the philosophy of Dr Leavis and - through its influence on Sydney University - some of its effect on Australian literature, including the strange disparagement of the left-wing works of Patrick White, and the interesting nature of Professor Kramer's professional Conservatism. For the sake of lightness in passing here, I should add that I remember Dr Margaret Diesendorf's observation that both Professor Kramer's and Professor A.D. Hope's lives would have ended more happily if they had acknowledged their attraction to each other and eloped. Margaret was a romantic Viennese, but there was some point in the observation, at least perhaps that they acknowledge their difficulty. I did not know Professor Kramer, but I corresponded with Alec Hope affectionately for a couple of decades and he did seem to have some preoccupation with Professor Kramer. At one point, I sent him a poem about a totally different female professor, and he wrote back that it was a 'Kramer-type medallion'. Whether that is significant or not, there is no doubt that sublimated sexuality is to some extent at the core of the Leavis problem. There is no doubt, too, that in a conservative university context one is never sure if one is dealing with the Great Tradition or perhaps the Great Game.

Part of the difficulty is that system similar to the Roman Empire adopting and educating the offspring of leaders from its colonies and then sending them home to rule for Rome. There is a constant stream from Australian universities to universities in the U.S. or Britain. In the case of the U.S. to Britain, it argues for the continuing importance of MI6 to the CIA. The unlikely development of Bill Clinton, for example, involved a Rhodes Scholarship, as did that of the current pet capitalist Democratic Party contender Pete Buttigieg. We won't digress on to Bob Hawke.



Leonie Kramer graduated from the University of Melbourne, achieved her PhD from Oxford in 1953 and then tutored there. She was a Visiting Professor at Harvard. She was the first female Professor of English in Australia, first woman Chair of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and first female Chancellor of Sydney University. She was always proud of her connections with right-wing institutions and publications, including *Quadrant*, and - like Salusinszky - was an unashamed professional right-winger, apparently making it much easier to understand her. She was, however, a complex emblem, readily letting herself be demonised if it served the purposes of a larger conservative chess game, such as perhaps the Demidenko affair. She called her memoir *Broomstick*. She cited Cambridge's Dr Leavis that literature was a core discipline of humanist learning. In the case of Leavis, the nature of that learning involved selecting a hierarchy of writers with what he saw as a responsible attitude to life's complexity, and these were represented by D.H. Lawrence, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Joseph Conrad and Henry James. It is easy to see how Kramer could have regarded her own specialty, Henry Handel Richardson, as having the same characteristics. What these writers actually have in common, however, is not some mature balanced tone but a moral urgency fueled by their fear that society's corruption, society's silliness, or a character's internalised despair will prevent sexual consummation and survival.

The main purpose of establishing exclusive literary hierarchies, of course, is that the guardians of those hierarchies maintain power by seizing on some common characteristics of the chosen works as selection criteria, and use them as weapons to attack other works perceived as an ideological threat. As in the case of Northrop Frye, however, where identifying and recommending the Biblical underpinning of literature turned gratifyingly into Frye's own Blakean social rebellion, there are often other characteristics within those works which undermine the conservative process.

In the case of Conrad, the parable which stays most in my mind - apart from the terrible death of *Victory's* Baron Heyst when he loses faith in his lover, Lena, having never had faith in life - is the suicide of Don Martin in *Nostromo*. Don Martin is a young South American revolutionary and he and the revolutionary hero Nostromo find themselves lost on an island with some gold to fund the Revolution. Nostromo leaves to find help, promising to return. He is impressionable and emotional and encounters some distractions. On the island, Don Martin slowly becomes prey to his own proud critical brain, losing faith in seeing his beloved Antonia again, and in Nostromo still being alive. He takes a boat out, killing himself and sinking with the gold. When Nostromo returns, he is mystified at the



island's emptiness. It is good to think that decades of Sydney University and Teachers' College students were thus being taught not to lose faith in the left-wing.

In the case of Henry James, the recurrent Jamesian theme of the innocent but heroic young woman surrounded by deceit and intrigue seems to me to have been importantly mirrored in the example of Professor Elizabeth Webby and the magazine *Southerly*. Professor Webby was a very suitable candidate for the Australian Literature Chair and the editorship of *Southerly*, and she was championed reliably by the admirable Professor Wilkes. She was opposed by open conservatives such as Leonie Kramer, who preferred the male candidates. Elizabeth Webby was apparently also supported by newly declared male feminist but conservatively-educated forces, who wished to assist her with *Southerly*. As any sane person, or Jamesian heroine, would do, she took all this at face value, even obligingly agreeing to abdicate the *Southerly* editorship to her apparent new support after a stated period of time. She achieved the Professorship and editorship, but others seemed to have an unrevealed timetable in play. Her erstwhile new support began demanding she abdicate effective editorial power much sooner than she had agreed. Like James' Isabel Archer, she stuck to her arrows, and stayed. Whereupon, what may have been the Helen Demidenko antisemitism chessgame was played against her, and she found herself in a public debate commenting on *The Hand That Signed the Paper*, which she did not consider dangerously antisemitic, but which she did not think worthy of the Miles Franklin. She sailed softly and steadily through the dangerous shallows of the contrived conflict, and retained *Southerly*. The editorial consequence was that her magazine continued to choose freely from generally submitted material, including powerful anti-war pieces, rather than the magazine being planned for controlled individual commissioning. Professor Webby's former supporter's urgent timetable, however, may still have been in place. The magazine *Heat* was established at Newcastle University, declaring its anti-authoritarianism as well as its outraged anti-antisemitism. Henry James himself, or the MI in the car to Orange, could not have plotted the alternative outcome better, but it isn't what the Leavisites would have considered to be in the style of their Great Tradition, which was characterised by a measured, worldly, knowing and classical tone.

In regards to recommending such a tone, we should look now at A.D.Hope and his reaction to Patrick White, and also at the reasons White was the target. There is firstly no reason to assume anything deliberately consistently destructive in Alec's behaviour. I did indeed correspond with him for a couple of decades, and what seemed to me to be his usual code





of conduct was to establish that he had urbane but strict traditional literary values, as if to impress some courted conservative audience, and then to mitigate his stance hurriedly and anxiously if he feared he'd actually hurt anyone's feelings. Early in our correspondence, I had this very experience about my long anti-war poem *The Problem of Evil*. Alec wrote a poem about it and sent it to me. It was warm but teasing, and his reservations about the work seemed only to be concerned with the use of ampersands and his (common) misconception that the narrator was female, hence his poem's Germanic wordplay about 'Madchen' and 'Mauser'. I wasn't remotely offended but he courteously apologised at once, anyway, since the declared basis of our correspondence was an unexpected respect for each other's works, although those works were so different.

In a more extreme example, it is completely within character that in 1955 Alec notoriously would write this in the *Sydney Morning Herald* about *The Tree of Man*: 'When so few Australian novelists can write prose at all, it is a great pity to see Mr. White... deliberately choose as his medium this pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge,' but soon declare uneasily that he had begun to reconsider his opinion. It is not Alec's ingrained literary conscience that is relevant here, but the question as to why his conservative circle chose to target White so early, as is exemplified by that review written to please them.

It was not until the Seventies that White won the Nobel Prize and became a very public left-wing voice, including starting his own campaign for nuclear disarmament and appearing on platforms with Tom Uren and Jack Munday. Why was he already such a target for the right-wing in 1955? In July, 1958, when John Maury, the head of the CIA's Russian Division and Director of the Pasternak Nobel Prize machinations - AEDINOSAUR - wrote to the CIA Head of Operations, Frank Wisner that 'There is no call to revolt against the regime in the novel, but the heresy which DrZhivago preaches - political passivity - is fundamental', there had already been a focus on the Nobel Prize for much longer within MI6. The 1950s equivalent to the MI in the car to Orange certainly would have predicted the Nobel Prize for White. As we've seen from Jackson Pollock, the CIA had no real brief for a classic art style, but the Leavisites in Australia were an influential and loyal right-wing force, and they seem to have been the chosen tool initially to combat White. As the CIA favours the sledgehammer as well as the nutcracker, the right-wing tabloids brandished their thoughts about White with headlines such as 'THIS PLAY STINKS', while various Project Mockingbird literary reviews undermined him subtly. The focus in most had become his rejection of Australian culture, since one supposes the Leavisites really had a hard



time pinning the accusation of 'experimental prose' on him. His actual style seems based on D.H. Lawrence, with adventures into easily comprehended vernacular and some clear but successfully intense poetic imagery.

To speculate on the reasons the Intelligence Agencies may have recognised White as a left-wing threat so early, one has to first consider that he was an RAF Intelligence Officer in Palestine during the Second World War, early in which he fell in love with his lifelong partner, Manoly Lascaris, a Greek who joined the Greek Army. Lascaris was half-American and from an ancient family that had become impoverished. His general statements reveal an acute perception of the plight of the poor and a distaste for Greek political unawareness. The macrocosm for the microcosm of the early White-Lascaris relationship is Winston Churchill's betrayal of the Greek Resistance at the end of the Second World War. Churchill changed his backing to Fascist remnants and social conservatives because he feared a socialist government in Greece, and as a result many of the Resistance were massacred. It would probably not have been White's homosexuality that disturbed Intelligence Agencies (although their treatment of Alan Turing shows their surprising unease at homosexuality in certain situations) but the possible nature of Lascaris' political sympathies.

Interestingly, in White's beautiful unfinished novel from the early 80s, *The Hanging Garden*, the young female central character, Eirene - who is based on Lascaris, and is a refugee in Sydney during the Second World War - has an Australian mother and a father who was a Greek Communist who has died - presumably executed - in prison. Whilst both White and Lascaris opposed the regime of the Colonels in Greece, they continued to visit the Lascaris family there, and there may have been reasons that they could not have been more open about the nature of the right-wing opposition to White. Once White was certain of the Nobel in 1973, and once the Colonels were deposed in 1974, some elements of the Intelligence opposition to him may have given up, and he took the opportunity to be much more explicit, being also fortified by the Nobel as such. But the Lascaris factor may be further evidence of White's enormous courage in both early and later life. It is a lethal business.

One of the inferences to be drawn from the Patrick White example is that an accusation of stylistic over-experimentation will tend to be a political confection. Another and different aspect of the right-wing causing trouble for artists, however, is, as in the case of Pollock, the promotion of a certain type of experimental art - either as a patriotic ideological stance, or as a lucrative commodification. We should consider the notorious case



of the New York Museum of Modern Art. The expanding MoMA is funded by billionaires whose interest is in increasing their own wealth by speculating on art prices and donating to avoid taxes. In contrast, the public New York Metropolitan Museum of Art is under-funded and subject to stringent economies. Both the alternate-right and the left-wing have recoiled from the nature of the MoMA funding, as it has involved a strange crew including reckless traders and associates of Jeffrey Epstein. This of course means connections with Intelligence Agencies. MoMA also actually named a new gallery in its US\$400 million expansion after Glenn Dubin, who was their valued donor, but also the first man with whom Virginia Roberts Giuffre alleges Epstein forced her to have sex when she was fifteen. Interestingly, Dubin recently donated the maximum amount possible to the Presidential Campaign of Rhodes scholar Pete Buttigieg, whose function as a patriotic tool may have been to attract Democratic Party numbers until he could transfer them to Joe Biden (who eventually may, of course, need to transfer them back).

In the dissident mind, therefore, one can understand the connection of experimental art's viewer-decided value and meaning - postmodernism - with falsity and corruption. This wariness is exacerbated by the fact that the works in the worthy and needy Metropolitan Museum of Art tend to be traditional and representational. I should stress at this point that the actual works in both museums are significant and beautiful, and that the artists in both deserve preservation. In both instances, however, the reputation (and, if living, the survival and self-esteem) of individual artists is threatened by obvious right-wing mechanisms. There is a general funding movement from public to private - as we have recently witnessed in Australia - and the consequences are the subjection of art to oligarchic values, even if these are disguised in the language of Non-Government Organisations and charities. Indeed, the commodification of art has similar dangers to the commodification of nature.

On a related matter, whilst relief has been expressed at the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust's rejection of a proposal by the private consortium Cockatoo Island Foundation Limited to turn historic and vulnerable Cockatoo Island into an 'Art Island', like Japan's Naoshima Island, requiring a whole of island lease to the Foundation, we should remember that the Trust is due to be wound down by 2033. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, under its new management, has already featured an editorial that seemed to be opposing the development but on closer reading merely suggested it go ahead but under some government regulation. The project in fact involved large government subsidy. There is no doubt that the Foundation's unfortunate concept will linger.



Naoshima Island itself was created by the Benesse Corporation, the parent company of Berlitz Language Schools, which was previously Fukutake Publishing, founded in 1955. Naoshima is a pretty island in the Seto Inland Sea. Benesse's museums and hotel were designed by Ando Tadeo and its municipal buildings and schools were designed by Ishii Kazuhiro. It serves as the main venue for the Setouchi Triennale art festival. Whilst Benesse is a straightforward investing company, not a consortium with charitable and 'non-profit' attributes, there are some interesting aspects of Naoshima in terms of artistic definition. The art is interactive to the point of expensive hotel rooms, and paying guests have extra privileges in access to the art. In that sense, such projects represent the incarnation of interactive postmodernism. Whilst there is nothing wrong with that, there is a corresponding risk that art which cannot be commodified for interaction or commercial purposes may not be highly valued. Interestingly, just as Cockatoo Island has historical Indigenous importance, traditional Japanese woodblock prints are about the autonomous tonal harmony and mood of each work and are therefore - in contrast to Naoshima - self-contained.

When Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites stipulated that art should have use, the general meaning was that artifacts should have artistic merit. The further extension in Ruskin's terms seems to have been that certain artworks had social function in that they ennobled humanity and the nation. This function is not about meaning as such, but I am reminded of Wittgenstein's aphorism 'The meaning of a word is its use.' In Ruskin's terms, it was, in truth, to some extent the use that provided the meaning. This was the motivation behind his critical revulsion at Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold, the Falling Rocket* (1875). Ruskin objected to the painting in his monthly periodical for the 'workmen and labourers of Great Britain', *Fors Clavigera*: 'I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.' Whistler sued him, was awarded nominal damages, and the trial was a public sensation, perhaps - as Henry James observed - diminishing the general status of art. The basis of Ruskin's objection, however, was not that Whistler was too abstract - the vivid painting of Thames fireworks is actually much more representational than many works by Ruskin's revered Turner - but that it did not reflect the dignity of reality in a way that could be useful to mankind. Ruskin may have intuited the work's autonomy and bristled. Whistler was basing his Nocturnes deliberately on the spirit and tonal harmony of Japanese woodblocks. It was not post-modernism that infuriated Ruskin, therefore, but its lack.



In terms of historical development, there is a clear timeline between Ruskin inspiring Cecil Rhodes and then the Cecil Rhodes Society, the British power structure's passion for national conspiracies, the foundation of MI5 and MI6 and subsequently their construction of the CIA: the right-wing use of post-modernist art has the familiarity and expertise of three centuries behind it.

To return to the subject of writers and Intelligence agencies, I feel I should discuss my judicial enthusiasm for A.J.P. Taylor's theory of accidental and personality-influenced historical events in light of his employment by the Information Research Department (IRD). Between 1945 and 1977, according to newly unclassified archives, the British Government subsidised the BBC and Reuters to carry propaganda fictions against the USSR and those perceived as its supporters. The IRD was designed to identify and discredit 'Russian supporters'. It also ran News Agencies in Turkey, India, Pakistan, Egypt and Lebanon. It employed writers such as Bertrand Russell, Arthur Koestler, George Orwell, and Taylor. It finally lobbied for Britain's entry into Europe via the European League for Economic Cooperation, partnered to the American Committee for a United Europe. In fact, it can be seen that there was an overlap between IRD literary employees and CIA funded literary voices such as those published in *Encounter*. One of the many intended consequences of the recent U.S. Russiagate comedy, of course, may be to attempt to rehabilitate the reputation of *Encounter* and its 'cuckolds' or agents. Many *Encounter*-like projects still recur in Western literary circles.

One notorious example of IRD activity is an extant list Orwell made for them of writers who seemed to him too dubious politically for them to employ. That does not in any way detract from his stated belief in democratic socialism - he had never been ultimately sympathetic to any other ideological positions (*Animal Farm* was based on Stalinism, *1984* was based on the BBC) - and it certainly couldn't have been used in attempts such as that of Evan Jones and Frank Knopfmacher to argue that he would have supported The Vietnam War. But it is interesting that even someone as sceptical as Orwell agreed to such a divisive listing task when subjected to the propaganda of the time. Concurrently, Russell reportedly wanted to nuke the Russians, but regained his peaceful equilibrium as time went on. There is a temptation to identify Taylor's belief in accidents, coincidences and human foibles as designed to support a right-wing ideology, but the general narrative tone of his histories is to show how such individual human characteristics shape themselves into radical left-wing persistence, as in the case of Charles James Fox, or at least into shrewd humane administrative anomalies, as in the case of Bismarck. As I have said, I still agree sometimes with that





view, but now increasingly perceive more organised political continuities and longer processes. Human foibles may account, however, for that extraordinary choice of otherwise balanced writers to join exciting patriotic conspiracies like the IRD. So many writers and politicians of that generation and later were enthralled when young by the comforting, inclusive posh reliability of publications like *Boy's Own Paper*. Even Aneurin Bevan, then a coal miner in his early teens, was hooked on them. When I was ten, in 1960, there was still a serial about World War Two called 'Schoolgirl Secret Agent' in an English Schoolgirls' Magazine (was it *Schoolfriend* or *Girl's Crystal*?) and I always read it eagerly when it wended its way to Australia via ship. In his last years, the Australian poet Bruce Beaver told me cheerfully that he usually comforted and distracted himself by re-reading his ample collection of the *Boy's Own Paper*.

One of the less comforting aspects of government right-wing conspiracies in the form of Intelligence Agencies and Patriotic Societies is their alarmingly frequent disloyalty to their own members. There seems to have been tragic pathos, for example, in the Profumo Scandal's osteopath-artist Stephen Ward's faith that the Intelligence Services MI5 and MI6, both of which had recruited him to gain information and leverage on British High Society as well as on the Russians, would come to his aid when he was made a scapegoat by the governing Tory Party. He was either driven to suicide in a friend's flat, or was suicided there with the help of sleeping tablets by a Polish fellow agent. Geoffrey Robertson wrote a book about it and Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote an opera about it. But what we should also remember from the point of view of this essay topic is that Ward was an accomplished portrait artist, with a talent for portraying the political complexities and secrets of his subjects. His painting known as *The Missing Witness* memorably depicts Mariella Novotny, who had fled the U.S. incognito in 1961 after having had relationships with both John and Robert Kennedy. She is the link between her close friend Ward and the American as well as British Intelligence agencies, and seems to have used traditional - including sadomasochistic - sexual espionage methods, being known as 'The Government Chief Whip'. According to her friend, Christine Keeler, Novotny's suicide was also assisted by Novotny's employer Intelligence Agencies. Ward's portrait shows a rigid, gaunt-boned, elegant boyish woman whose traumatised eyes have ghosts in them, but nonetheless seem capable of authentic compassion. Ward's other portraits are intense character studies in which he seizes on the governing characteristic of the subject, still without the sketchiness of caricature. His 1959 portrait of Lady Astor is particularly indelible with its powerful cheekbones and ancient but implacable smile. Again, his treatment of the eyes is profound.



Whilst there is no stretch of imagination that could classify James Le Mesurier an artist, unless in creating propaganda (which we should remember has no real connection to the Ancient Greek discipline of Rhetoric), I would like to consider his betrayal by the Intelligence Agencies briefly, here, as I have been accused in a review in the previously Fairfax Press of perhaps maligning Le Mesurier's MI6 organisation, The White Helmets, in my *brookings: The noun* poetry collection. The White Helmets were established by the British to help fanatical religious forces and mercenaries overthrow the Syrian Government. They outlived their Syrian usefulness when the Americans preferred to try to divide Syria and the British pulled back. Le Mesurier, either because he had embezzled some of what must have been the irresistibly profligate and untidy profits, or because he Knew Too Much, was found dead on the ground near the edge of a rather low roof in Turkey. The Turks seem to think he'd been running at the time. His wife - who had also been an Intelligence employee - said he was depressed and that she stuffed their cash into travel bags as soon as she knew he was gone. Without elaborating too much, I think my White Helmet case can rest on those facts alone.

I would like next to return to the subject of resorts developed for art tourism and their connection with post-modernist audience participation and with environmental interaction. This was partly prompted when I saw a few weeks ago that Naoshima Island had been closed down temporarily because of the Covid-19 virus emergency, and later that Tasmania's riverbank Museum of Old and New Art was now closed for the same reason. MONA in repose is in itself worth special attention.

Before I discuss MONA, I should again stress that I have always been enthusiastic about post-modernism. When I was twenty-one, I delighted in writing the blank chapter in *Tristram Shandy* that Sterne left for the reader to complete. The fact that the reader and writer could combine in a fluid and fluxing act always excited me. Later, when postmodernist theory became prevalent, I no longer saw any need to defend the reader's autonomy and recognised that there might also be a need to defend the autonomy of the writer, but I've always valued all forms of kinetic art. As I've suggested, by its involvement of immediate participatory personal reaction, postmodernism must be viewed as a form of kinetic art.

One of the aspects of kinetic art that we should examine is the political nature of the alloy created when art and science combine. I am cautious about this, as I'm at once reminded of the *Encounter* writer Arthur Koestler's attractive theories in books such as *The Act of Creation*, where he sees creation as coming from the combination of two disparate



elements, including from a combination of art and science. This combination of disciplines has its antecedent of course in the work of the German philosopher and explorer Humboldt, whose interdisciplinary philosophy inspired much of the German school system. Again, I was interested that one of my previous publishers is soon scheduled to publish her book about the young Australian dancer and choreographer Philippa Cullen, who died at the age of twenty-five in 1975. Whilst that publisher has chosen to no longer publish my work, I am still interested in her ideas, and through reading have been aware for a few years of her enthusiasm for Humboldt. It seems to me that her Cullen book must reflect this, as Cullen's philosophy was to combine dancing with computer science, kinetic reactions to choreographed movement and vice versa. In reality, Cullen may have been moving away from this somewhat and towards diverse communal dancing traditions, but her reputation is most for her interactive field experiments. Subliminally perhaps, it may have seemed to me dispiriting that the left-wing philosophy of my art had been replaced in this publishing philosophy by that of Koestler and Humboldt, but therefore it is again important here to examine the larger implications of interactive art.

Considering the Tasmanian MONA, therefore, I think we should consider the nature of its being, and whether it is conservative in its conception, and what effect it has on the nature of art. Its stated obsession with sex and death seems as if it could have either a left-wing or right-wing significance. Now the museum resort does rest in suspended animation, we can study it and speculate a while.

Sex and death. In a fiction by the brilliant Brigid Brophy, there were two potential lovers on a balcony and one asked the other what they were thinking about. One answered 'Sex and death'. Asked the same question, the other replied, 'Sex and death and Mozart'. Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art has been described by its creator, the professional gambler and art collector David Walsh as a 'subversive adult Disneyland'. It includes a winery, a hotel, a restaurant, an agnostic chapel and a members' Cemetery. The gallery itself is windowless and the visitor descends three stories to then ascend in a spiral (reversing the downward spiral stairs at the Guggenheim) through the numerous exhibits, including a mummy, an excreting machine, Sydney Nolan's enormous snake mural, and some expected but stylish vaginal representations. The rather self-conscious but successfully touristy annual Mofo and Dark Mofo music and art festivals also occurred at MONA, although all has been stilled at present by Covid-19.



Is professional gambling conservative or subversive? The concept of a professional gambler extends from lucrative computerised numbers systems to the romance of a Mississippi riverboat, but the reality can involve a certain amount of raw luck and human understanding. Walsh's observations seem to be that in general the public's choice of favourite will be correct, but that in this there will be axiomatic prejudices (such as that the weight on a horse is more important than the record of the jockey) that can be exploited to the professional's advantage. He also works against the concept of the odds staying consistent by calculating the residual potential in a sequence. There is no particular reason to see professional gambling in this sense as right-wing or left-wing. It subverts other gamblers but also the House. There is a general respect for human reasoning in his methods. His identification with art need not be seen as gratuitously exploitative, as it makes prudent sense in terms of rationalising income tax, with which he once had some difficulties. The danger of conservatism and the danger to artists in a concept like MONA is that someone used to the generalisations of gambling may also have learned to accept and adapt popular conventions about art.

In terms of the general public's view, art and academia are safe places where the family, particularly a well-off family, can stash away their lunatic relatives. Art is also regarded as attention-getting and inauthentic, and the artist as a fraud, albeit sometimes a cunning one. Interactive art may reinforce this, as the audience can confuse it with simpler experiences like school visits to a tech museum. I once briefly ran the bookshop at a Sydney museum, and the book repository also contained an unsuccessfully taxidermied and disintegrating koala on a branch. One contracted ear infections from having to shift it around. The resident human mummy was always a cause for visitor fascination, and I suggested that we might invent and sell small plastic ones with unwrappable bandages, but my idea didn't fly. Perhaps, however, it would have flown at MONA.

There is a problem in governing the audience experience to the extent that an institution like MONA does. To some extent it is the problem of all postmodernism. For the direct interaction to be possible, the interaction must be controlled and limited, and the result is less not more interpretative freedom. It is also necessary for the institution to reassure the audience in advance that the experience will be in essence conservative, not dangerous. The sex and death will not be unpredictable forces but reproduce the familiar atmosphere of a Hammer Horror or Carry On film: extreme but safely shocking. *Quadrant* obligingly described MONA as 'expensive and tense decay', but the trappings of decadence really do suggest Disneyland, and there is a consequent



caricaturing of the role of art. The concept of experimental art as subversion is a dangerously attractive one, too, and often used to seduce and undermine the artist, as we have seen in the case of Pollock.

It may be argued that Walsh had not much choice of concept if he wished to produce a popular private museum. He was trapped in the philogenesis of museums, just as Mary McCarthy argued that she was trapped in the subjective philogenesis of the novel and could not write from a Victorian God's eye view, but only from the viewpoint of one character.

Postmodernist perspective in art and the loss of God's eye view, however, present a huge ethical dilemma for the artist in terms of sponsorship. Before discussing that further, and in regard to what constitutes acceptable patronage, I recently had a brief discussion with a fellow writer about my suggestion that one of our former publishers might have been employed by an intelligence agency (I will never be sure which one of those was possible, but she assumed I meant CIA). I was surprised that she said she wouldn't publish with them if so, and I pointed out how many respectable and admirable writers have been published by *Paris Review*. Perhaps the difference was that *Paris Review*'s origins have always been fairly candid, unlike *Encounter*'s, and the Márquez situation of feeling cuckolded involves deception. *Quadrant*'s cheques to writers were always issued, for example, in the name of the CIA's Congress for Cultural Freedom. No deception there. Once when I was in my early twenties I sent the ten dollars I'd just earned for a *Quadrant* poem to Nigel Roberts to support his magazine *Free Poetry*, and told him we were 'milking the capitalist cow.' Years later at a book launching he quoted that to me gratefully and persistently tried to reimburse the ten dollars, but I refused, ostensibly in case the tableau was misconstrued, as at one stage the ten dollar note was at my feet.

My reference to the God's eye view here, however, is significant, as in general terms artists will tend to rationalise irksome conservative patronage as being inevitable, citing such precedents as the volatile relationship between Pope Julius II and Michelangelo as he painted the Sistine Chapel ceiling in the very early 16th Century. But there is a difference between this and modern conservative patronage. Modern intelligence agencies, for example, pride themselves on their postmodernism and moral relativism, and as patrons they are governed by no conception of a higher ethical authority like that which was mutual to both Julius and Michelangelo.

It could be argued that the concept of patriotism can replace that of religion in this capacity, and I am fully willing to acknowledge genuine





patriotism in intelligence agencies, but at that point they may have no honest overall mutual political goal with the employed artist, even if the artist is temporarily enthralled. So the artist may suffer. One of the things that troubles me, for example, about conservative patronage, is its predilection for ostentatiously supporting Indigenous and Women's art, often both together. One of the warning signs about the Cockatoo Island Project may have been its seductive pledge to feature Indigenous Women's expression.

Although I myself would qualify as a 'woman of colour' because of my Indian ancestry, I have always been reluctant to impinge on Indigenous matters. In my work, there are only two often recurrent Indigenous female characters: Ruth, an elderly Darug woman, who runs a network of women's shelters in Sydney's Western Suburbs, and her young relative Olivia, who is an ASIO agent. Olivia first appears in my novel, *Play With Knives: Five*, and has an intricate relationship with the established character Clare.

I chose to create Olivia as a character because her situation seems to me vitally relevant. She was recruited while a Writing student at the Western Sydney University, but had already written for the Murdoch Press. The Murdoch Press had been instrumental in helping one of her family in prison. Indeed, ever since a young Rupert Murdoch campaigned against the death sentence of the Indigenous Max Stuart in the *Adelaide News* in 1958, the mistreatment of the Indigenous in prison has been one of Murdoch's special causes. Olivia's sympathies are quite explicable, and also her need to feel valued. Later in my poetry collection, *The Espionage Act*, she agrees to accompany the left-wing character George Jeffreys' CIA drinking buddy to a Company-organised international Indigenous conservation conference, but I have tried to suggest her decision may not be that simple. It is a lethal business.

I situated Olivia's recruitment at the Western Sydney University because of that university's open patriotic association with defence agencies, including ASIO, and its burgeoning creative writing programs. Several lecturers in the linguistic area, for example, have been candid and proud about their joint-employment (apparently on contract) by the defence complex, and there were recruitment posters in the buildings. The Dean of Humanities when the Writing and Society Research Group and the Whitlam Professorship were established had a previous history at the conservative University of Geneva, as did the Whitlam Professor, who had earlier spent a decade in London completing a PhD under the ex-*Encounter* editor Professor Kermode, and had tried to take editorial control of *Southerly* before establishing the magazine *Heat* and then



Giramondo Publishing. When out of curiosity my daughter joined the American-based Honours society, as the University recommended, she systematically received recruitment offers from ASIO. This patriotic connection is of course typical of many universities, in Australia and elsewhere (we've already referred to Cecil Rhodes and so on) but there are some interesting aspects of it in this WSU case which seem relevant to my own experience and to this essay. As a successor to the paper magazine *Heat*, the directors of Giramondo and their W. and S. R. Group were behind the creation of the *Sydney Review of Books*. The University also trained as writing students at least two very influential editors: one to formerly edit the *Sydney Review of Books* and then to become a judge on the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, and another to revive the old avant-garde publication *The Lifted Brow* and expand it into book publishing.

The decision to revive *The Lifted Brow* for a WSU protégé is intriguing. The *Brow* provided a ready-made left-wing definition. It was first published in 2007 in Brisbane by the innovator Ronnie Scott, and was designed to mirror much earlier experimental avant-garde periodicals such as *The Ear in a Wheatfield* and *Magic Sam*. One of its main declarations of intent was to avoid government subsidy, so that the magazine would not become dependent on such things for its survival. Its later second incarnation under the new editor from WSU, however, quickly acquired government funding and campaigned strenuously for that to continue. It does not denigrate the project or its organisation to note that its Art editors were family members of the Whitlam Professor, who always seemed particularly adept at acquiring government funding, not least from the days when *Quadrant's* Salusinszky headed the Literature Board, or now under the Morrison Government. Sound advice was simply always available. Even if the advice had come from the MI in the car to Orange himself, however, he could not have come up with anything cuter than the well-publicised way the *Brow* re-established its radical credentials. One of its female cartoonists spat on the face of a councillor at a local council meeting and then withdrew smoothly and quietly from public life, as the *Brow* defended her loquaciously in Main Stream Media.

I should also describe another revealing incident about the creation of conflict. At a time when I was still unsure of the political allegiances of one of my last publishers (the Whitlam Professor and his wife), and they had announced they would no longer publish me, my daughter organised a digital petition asking the publisher to continue publishing my work and political poetry in general. She had been requested by the publisher that as my daughter she become the publisher of my work, and whilst she was



very enthusiastic about my work, she felt that if possible I should have the larger publisher. The *Brow* editor and his associate at once began to attack her privately by email and Twitter, including suggesting that my work had been discontinued because of its low standard, and praising the former publisher and their decision. She pointed out their family connection with the publisher and the *Brow* responded that they had just discovered her own guilty secret - that I was her mother. They tweeted at her: 'Hoist on your own petard!'. Apart from the awfulness of such clichés, what was surprising was that they hadn't known I was related to my daughter, particularly as she was often the subject of my works, which were usually dedicated to her, and she was the subject of my book *The Winter Baby*, which had won the Victorian and NSW Premier's prizes for poetry. Whatever training the *Brow* editor received at WSU, it may not have been in Contemporary Australian Literature.

The *Sydney Review of Books* is an equally formidable and worthwhile study. We are considering the lethal business of creating conflict, and the *SRoB* is a weapon that may not yet have been fully deployed. The publication is digital, has a benign air and pays contributors generously, with sponsors such as a casino and a copyright agency, as well as the university. There is in their manifesto an intention to be also adversely critical, however, and this has already resulted in some peculiar and peculiarly structured attacks. These perhaps herald more in the same nature if it suits the patriotic ideology (they have some tendency to insert the word 'Australian' into their topics and titles) behind the publication's creation, and which may have already inculcated a subtle terror in the *SRoB*'s potential subjects. The *SRoB* has a well-nurtured critic, for example, whose reviews are supposed to be entertainingly negative, and who has already been rewarded by a North American sojourn and a lectureship at WSU. I first encountered this critic when he stated in *SRoB* that I had over-favoured my then-publisher (the Professor) in the Fairfax Best Books column. The critic asserted this by omitting some other publishers I had actually recommended, so I asked my publisher to speak to *SRoB*, which I knew my publisher had fathered. Mysteriously, he refused, so I threatened legal action and after some resistance by James Ley, the editor, my publisher intervened and pleaded with me to spare the publication, as the University wouldn't like paying for a lawyer. I did spare it, once my refutation was published after that misleading paragraph of the review. Last time I looked, my refutation was still there. Perhaps still smarting from this, the critic later published in *SRoB* a study purporting to show that the number of reviews for a book did not correspond with the number of prizes it received. His examples were a book of mine and one by another author. In both cases, his statistics were



remarkable in that his cut-off sampling point was before the period in which both books did receive major awards, otherwise his thesis would have been disproved. I was not overly excited by such a crudely competitive topic, and did not respond, but I made a mental note that this critic was still likely to be oddly agile with his statistics in the future. It did not occur to me that his approach to me may have been part of the softening of the ground to prepare for my dismissal by the publisher, and perhaps it was not, although I doubt that anything important happened at *SROB* without the knowledge of the two Giramondo directors.

Another example of *SROB* using this critic to enhance its weaponry was a disparaging piece on the young author Hannah Kent, who had written a popular novel about the victim of an historical death penalty in Iceland. The disparagement seemed unnecessary at the time, as Kent was not being acclaimed as an established literary figure, simply as a talented new writer with a topic - beautiful young women facing Executioners in atmospheric cold climates - that has lured readers at least since Thomas Hardy's *Tess*. To paraphrase Hardy, however, the President of the Immortals wanted some sport with Hannah Kent, and the *SROB* critic undermined Kent's novel with the solemnity of Ed Murrow exposing Joe McCarthy. He seems indeed to have one single tone.

Another strange example of this was *SROB*'s large attacking article on the editor and critic Peter Craven. I was immediately intrigued and speculative. Were they just showing their claws as an exercise and general warning, or had Craven done something to offend them? Or might he do so in future? He had just written a positive review of my then most recent book, but I do tend to accept the publishing Professor's assessment that my work has no political significance for them, so I doubt if Craven's review of me was the reason for the *SROB* essay. The attack on Craven was ruthless, throwing in the accustomed carefully selected derogatory statistics (this time including Google) and culminating in accusations of racism that would have done credit to those right-wing politicians and press who libeled Jeremy Corbyn. It is an accustomed technique. The small seed for this gigantic weed of conflict in Craven's case was a comment that he had made about a PEN anthology of Australian literature. Granted that organisations like PEN can be often and easily infiltrated by right-wing forces, and that this particular anthology was edited by a Giramondo author and launched emphatically by Julia Gillard herself in Washington, one should still, however, examine the issue closely and not dismiss the *SROB* essay as merely furiously defending the PEN book. Craven had objected that the roughly 12 per cent inclusion of Indigenous material, mostly historical documents not intended as literature, was detrimental to the Indigenous literary work in the anthology, such as that



by Alexis Wright. He was clearly enthusiastic about Wright's work in itself, but the *SRoB* essay slid sleekly into a chess gambit declaring that Craven did not value Wright, and then gave a gratuitous self-righteous defence of her, including quotes from her work. Craven has never been a racist and has supported Indigenous writing, including publishing Marcia Langton, so, as with that on Jeremy Corbyn, we should question the motives of the attack.

One motive could, for example, have been a desire to anticipate and deflect future criticism of Alexis Wright that would not be criticism by Craven. Wright is a fine, energetic writer and academic, but the publishing world is a Jamesian one of needless false emphasis, and publishers may have feared unnecessarily that she is vulnerable to the fact that her husband is Anatoly (Toly) Sawenko, the white anthropologist who was the advisor - and the prominent character Arkady - in Bruce Chatwin's 1987 bestseller, *The Songlines*. The book has attracted much Indigenous criticism, as its sources are not Indigenous, but influential if idealistic white public servants like Sawenko, and it focuses on geographic mysticism rather than on political urgencies like land rights. A fear of vulnerability to the Arkady connection was perhaps exacerbated by the unusual WSU publicity statement that Wright, Sawenko, the two Giramondo directors and the then Dean of Humanities and his wife often dined together. There is no doubt that Wright's success is well-deserved and independent of conservative media manipulation, but conservative manipulators have a compulsion to hide any imagined imputable traces (unless there is a strategy otherwise). There is certainly a sense in the *SRoB* Craven article that Wright is somehow threatened, but the cause of that threat can hardly be Craven. In reality, the threat may be from the very forces claiming to defend her, as if she too were a Henry James heroine fighting her way through shadowy complexity. The final uneasy effect of the *SRoB* piece is to the detriment of Wright's writing, and it should not be. The piece defeats itself by leaving us wondering like this as to why the critic protests so much.

Another function of the anti-Craven piece is to propound that the large numbers of Indigenous women writers currently sponsored or published by organisations such as Morrison's Australia Council for the Arts, the Copyright Agency or the *Lifted Brow* should not be subjected to hierarchical literary analysis of the type it suggests Craven practises. I'm sure that Craven would see this *SRoB* argument as patronising towards those writers, but for our purposes there is a different aspect to the conflict. We return to discussing the values of the Leavisites. As we have seen, the original Great Tradition was based on ethical and therefore political values - albeit promoting British nationalism - but its exclusivist





tone lent itself to becoming an ideology of Australian academic conservatism, such as that practised by Professor Kramer. There was a prevalent Australian academic view that art should not be 'contaminated' by politics. It would seem that the *SRoB* piece is accusing Craven of this view, but his criticism and editorial choices have been consistently political as well as literary. He would be a figure most likely to incorporate political virtues cheerfully into his assessment of literary ones, if a piece had literary intention. The vulnerability here is again not of Craven, but in the real nature of the danger to the Indigenous literary women at issue in the *SRoB* essay. Which is where we return to my Indigenous character Olivia.

Although I see her as a character who is therefore in great danger, Olivia chooses her Conservative employment and funding self-awarely, in the patriotic environment of WSU, and because of the idealistic ambiguities and temptations of Murdoch. The huge conservative funding of Indigenous female writers, however, and the use of them to promote subsidy for schemes such as Cockatoo Island, is possibly a greater risk for their survival and well-being. It is, for example, a traditional Intelligence Agency tactic to create and fund a left-wing project and then to abandon it and ruin the participants. The fact that none of these projects can be questioned without the questioner being attached as racist or sexist - again, a traditional Intelligence Agency tactic - does not allow the participants themselves enough room to plan or escape. They are always being over-focused defensively outward, away from analysing the macrocosm. Again this seems to be a function of the *SRoB* essay on Craven: the declared new or revolutionary critical approach is supposed to be all-accepting if the writer is Indigenous. But we should remember that the funding of that which the conservative forces may see as amorphous numbers is transient. These numbers are commodities which become perilously interchangeable. At intervals, some may be publicised as the new saviours of Australian literature, but the vampiric aspiring controllers of art have no more respect for them than they had for Pollock or Márquez.

On the general subject of reactions to racial prejudice, I have been meaning to return as promised to the question of my grandfather and *The Bulletin*. In order to consider this, I should mention that, whilst my parents never mentioned my father's Indian blood, I had always heard from my extended family that my grandfather's mother was full-blood Indian. Recently, however, an invaluable helpful cousin has provided me with the actual family tree. Emma, my great grandmother, was herself of mixed blood, with an Indian paternal grandmother - a Bengali servant - and an Indian maternal great grandmother - apparently the sister of a



reigning Maharajah. This is important in terms of my grandfather - who was Emma's last child to be born in Bengal - as there is a family history of being criticised for mixed race as such. Emma's maternal grandfather, for example, was William Rossenrode, a surveyor who much assisted Colonel Sir George Everest in mapping the mountains of India. According to John Keay, who wrote *The Great Arc* on the topic, Rossenrode was often badly treated by Everest, who was aware of his mixed race. In passing, I'd suggest that poetic justice may have come a little into play historically, as Everest - who did not discover Mount Everest - objected to having it named after him, as the Hindus couldn't pronounce his name properly. He was right - his name was really pronounced 'EVE-rest' - but at least he is condemned to remain mispronounced forever.

My grandfather arrived in Australia as a little boy, accompanied by his parents, Emma and Alfred, his seven older siblings and a large pet tortoise. The family went to live on the NSW North Coast near Taree and my great grandparents were eventually buried there. The tortoise lived for a very long time, at the end with their descendants. My grandfather qualified under the old pupil-teacher system and was sent as a very young man to be headmaster at a small school near Braidwood on the NSW South Coast. There, he married Ellen Feeney, who was a dressmaker of Irish descent, and the youngest of the 'wild' Feeney girls. I've heard that she was related to the South Coast bare-knuckle boxing champion, renowned for lasting fifty or so rounds, and - although I am timid by nature - I sometimes wonder if I shouldn't draw on that DNA more often in crisis.

My grandfather was given a larger school - at Chakola, on the haunting Monaro - and then an even larger one, at Cranebrook, near pragmatic Penrith. The old schoolhouse, where my grandparents lived, remains. During the Great Depression in the Twentieth Century, my grandmother - as the Schoolmaster's Wife - always baked bread for the itinerant swagmen, and provided a place for them to sleep. One of my uncles remarked that he knew the Depression was finally over when there were no more beds on the veranda. Apart from my Nanna, my Grandfather had several passions, including ornithology, humanity, and literature. As well as poets like Tennyson (he named one of his daughters 'Enid'), literature was exemplified for him by J.F. Archibald's *The Bulletin*, for which he wrote sometimes. In his old age, he was delighted to learn from my father that I was also being published in *The Bulletin*. At that stage - the 1960s and 70s - of course, it was no longer radical and soon to be extinct, but I was glad of my publication in it, for his sake. Paradoxically - although I am always mindful of James Joyce's injunction against paradoxes - the



modern *Bulletin*, even if edited by conservatives, was not as blatantly racist as its brilliant, fire-breathing ancestor. I once discussed my grandfather's devotion to *The Bulletin* with a previous publisher, and he compared it to the fact that Kenneth Slessor had a close friendship with the antisemitic Lindsays, even though Slessor's father was Jewish. I am wary, however, of dismissing the issue simplistically, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to consider it here with you.

It might be suggested that my grandfather felt safe in the ambience of *The Bulletin* as its racism was directed against those of non-white skin colour, such as the Indigenous or Chinese. My grandfather's appearance, however, like that of most of my family, was distinctly non-white Indian. Indeed, his father was in the habit of teasing my grandfather's fair-complexioned sister as 'my English daughter'. Yet, I think I agree with my grandfather's apparent supposition that Archibald would not have found his ethnicity a problem. I don't think that in my grandfather we are dealing with an immigrant trying to negate his heritage in order to be absorbed, or the old platitude about one generation of migrants taking nationalistic umbrage at the next, but perhaps an intuition that *The Bulletin* was so uniformly anti-authoritarian and anti-imperialist that one of their key objections to non-white races was the idea of those races' obsequiousness to the Establishment and the practice by the Establishment of using non-white races for conservative purposes - for example, the 'Black Police' trackers. In Lawson's *The Drover's Wife*, the Indigenous man who is supposed to help the isolated woman has 'built the woodpile hollow', even though he is described as the descendant of Indigenous nobility. It is the betrayal of racial heritage that is often the target, as it is when Kipling warns against under-estimating the power of Indian culture and religion. Of course, there is in *The Bulletin's* philosophy also an appeal to the racism of the working man whose Trade Union rights are threatened by cheap labour, but again it is not in the interest of any race to be exploited as cheap labour. Whichever aspect of his ancestry - the Maharajah's sister or the Bengali servant - was involved, there was no ultimate reason for my grandfather not to take pride in *The Bulletin*, even if the publication must sometimes be seen as imprisoned grotesquely in its own nationalistic cultural tradition.

One attraction of *The Bulletin* to intelligent and straightforward readers like my grandfather was that it was reliably candid and explicit in its ideology, with no secret socialisation to be internalised by the reader. There is, as has been observed often, a tendency for the brain's synapses to accept what they read well before they are ready to question it. When I wrote my poem about synaptic - and existential - betrayal, *Mockingbird*,



*Mockingbird*, for my 2019 *brookings: the noun* collection, I began with this explanation:

'Cord Meyer and Allen Dulles began CIA Operation Mockingbird in 1950, hiring journalists from Corporate Media including CBS, *The NY Times*, American ABC, NBC, *Newsweek*, and Associated Press, employing about 3,000 CIA agents and over 400 journalists. Philip Graham of the Washington Post quotes a CIA operative: "You can get a journalist cheaper than a good call girl, for a couple hundred dollars a month". In 1976, a new policy was announced: the CIA "maintains covert relationships with about 50 American journalists or employees of U.S. media organizations. They are part of a network of several hundred foreign individuals around the world who provide intelligence for the CIA and at times attempt to influence foreign opinion through the use of covert propaganda. These individuals provide the CIA with direct access to a large number of foreign newspapers and periodicals, scores of press services and news agencies, radio and television stations, commercial book publishers and other foreign media outlets." Mockingbird was streamlined because it had been outsourced successfully offshore.

CIA motto: *The Work of a Nation. The Center of Intelligence.*  
Unofficial motto: *And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*' (John 8:32).'

The poem then expressed the dilemma created by this situation with deliberately lyrical diction, assuming that the intense physical characteristics of the lyric form would mirror and explain the internalisation process:

Mockingbird, mockingbird, you echoed me in the night,  
with nothing but your own mirror-light: 'I am the Work  
of a Nation. The Centre of Intelligence.' I scoffed:  
'The official motto. Tell me the unofficial, something like  
*Work shall set you free* - or was that Auschwitz?' The bird's  
cry blinded like a mirror: 'It was about truth, truth,  
not work, from John 8:32: *And you shall know the truth  
and the truth shall make you free.*' Tell me, mockingbird,  
mockingbird, tell me,  
you are wedge-tailed, winged grey, bosomed white,  
your round eyes, indelible pupils, freeze fierce, paranoid,  
claws gripping the branch eternal but elegantly relaxed,  
you are said to sing on graves, you are said to be sacred:  
as dangerous as an albatross to murder, mockingbird,  
mockingbird, tell me of your loyalty,







It is not necessary to suggest that the entire controversial narrative of Professor Samuel Goldberg and Sydney University was scripted tightly by someone like the MI in the car to Orange. Cards tend to fall in a certain way on a tilted table, and over centuries conservative forces have learned how to create accidents with a degree of (sometimes fallible) skill, and to foresee political momentum and create conflict. At any rate, Professor Goldberg and his supporters were dropped like a bomb on the Challis Chair at the Sydney University English Department in 1963. Goldberg had graduated from Oxford in 1953 and then worked at the University of Melbourne, where he built up a following for his Leavisite ideology. Like Leavis himself, he was an advocate of James Joyce, and his views included artistic experiment. What must be understood about the Australian Leavisites, however, is that their position tended to abandon Dr Leavis at the point of his actual selection of recommended works, which were sometimes explicitly political. The Australian Leavisites introduced into their criteria a conviction that literature should transcend politics and that a political thesis made a work inferior as art. As we've seen, this opinion is from a staunch conservative political tradition. At Sydney University, Professor Goldberg's curriculum was so limited that the exasperated but always humane and practical Professor Gerry Wilkes set up an alternative curriculum of broader literature, and the two curricula co-existed until the friction was impossible and Goldberg retreated promptly back to Melbourne. There was a residue, however, of hierarchical literary puritanism, and two contrasting literary strands remained academically, in the form of one strand including Wilkes and his wide-perspectived successor Elizabeth Webby, and another strand including Professor Leonie Kramer - whose political views were ostentatiously conservative and whose literary hierarchy was based on what she considered purity of style - and also her followers, even if some professed later to disregard her. We've seen how this was to manifest itself over time in the contest for *Southerly*. In regard to Goldberg and Kramer, however, it should be noticed that Kramer was not regarded as a combative Leavisite like Goldberg, and her choice of literary works was idiosyncratic to herself, although it markedly excluded anything problematic such as Patrick White. I think her conservative sexual opinions may be seen as something of a diversionary tactic here, as they are not consistent (she favoured other homosexual writers, such as Hal Porter), and as the real nature of her choices always reflect what one would expect from her position at *Quadrant*, and her overseas academic indoctrination. Later in life, she went out of her way to quote Leavis approvingly, including his recommendation that literature have an equal authority with what he saw as other sciences, but at the time immediately after Goldberg, she appeared to be a subtler and smoother alternative in



the Leavisite exclusionary niche. Some at that time did not see her as a Leavisite at all. Looking at the macrocosm here, the MI in the car to Orange might admire how conflict and controversy surrounding the first contender was created to eliminate that first contender and then to assist one who was even more conservative but less contentious instead. It is still a lethal business, too, and perhaps the MI would say that the initial pawns are often ignorant of their function. Whatever the microcosm, there is no doubt that a belief that fine literature could not have a political intention remained prevalent for a long time in Australian Universities. As Clive James observed regarding Andersonian influences in the Philosophy department, Sydney University was particularly important as its views were disseminated through its old great Teachers' College. One of the conventional ways that a literary mode can be opposed is to describe it as dated, and it interested me that when my politically oriented 2005 collection *Friendly Fire* was shortlisted for the Adelaide Festival Awards, the Judge's report said that I had breathed new life into a dead genre. And, of course, one of my ex-publishers always had a habit of describing 'your rhetoric' as if provocatively, and as if he were calling my game. And, of course, that turned out not to be a game.

In regard to the creation of conflict in art, I have promised you Medieval Venice, and the MI in the car to Orange would have understood it well. Indeed, many members of Western intelligence services now actually describe themselves as modern 'Venetians'. This is because in 1310 the Council of Ten was created in Venice, and across almost five centuries became the definitive example of a governing body practising internal and external espionage. It was composed of oligarchs - as was the larger general governing Council - and the members took turns at elected power and lived conservatively and comfortably. A line from Browning has been recurring to me: 'at Venice... where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings...' The overall Venetian Council was indeed adept at ceremony, including the occasional highly ritualised public execution. Executions by the Council of Ten, including of at least one over-ambitious Doge, were in contrast quite private, as was their proliferating network of servants and informants. There was a logical tidiness, a rationalisation, about Medieval Venice that would have appealed to the MI mind. Centuries before the Nineteenth Century focus on penal institutions, Venice had a prison system to deal with offenders and coped with its overcrowding by sentencing those fined for offences to defined short terms so that they did not stay imprisoned too long because of inability to pay. Penalties for crimes were usually fines, especially for the richer classes, but there was some deliberate public cruelty, and the Council of Ten also practised torture, interrogation and duress, and was for a long time in charge of



regulating public speech. Even in the early Fourteenth Century, the intricate and authoritative Venetian judicial system was not focused so much on the Medieval practice of justice being seen as a form of revenge, but on the Renaissance concept of justice seen as a way to influence behaviour. Their early Medieval art was concisely and vividly Gothic, culminating in the decorations for the Porta della Carta in 1443, near the bureaucratic desks and archives, and leading to the rooms of government and Justice. With their sensuously rounded cherubs, Ruskin described these decorations as 'a climax of voluptuous Gothic.' One feels that Ruskin's dedication to preserving the heritage of Venice must have been at least in part due to its political organisation. Those who wish to praise and control art do seem to have a natural affinity with the urge to participate in and engender espionage conspiracies, even if Ruskin may not have foreseen the Cecil Rhodes society he had inspired, or fully imagined the Venetian Council of Ten and its terrifying purposes.

As Venetian art transforms from Gothic to Renaissance, and the dexterous magnificence of Titian, the social nature of artistic function in Venice continues to be clear. It is Conspicuous Consumption, in Veblen's Phrase, and fulfilment of visual sexual delight for the oligarchs, and sumptuous advertisement for public institutions. To these ends, artists are assumed to be in constant insecure competition for public and private resources. The paintings in the Hall of the Greater Council in the Doge's Palace, begun in the early Fifteenth Century, are a case in point. By the time the young Titian was eager to join in the project, he was prevented by those supporting the older painter Bellini, and was only given another chance when Bellini's work was considered expensive and slow. These facts immediately reminded me of the construction of the Sydney Opera House, when similar accusations were made against Utzon, and again there was a simple concept that one artist must replace another, with no consultation between them. The concept of this rivalry as desirable in Venice is echoed today in art books such as *Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese: Rivals in Renaissance Venice* when Sixteenth Century conflicts for resources are made to seem exciting necessities for the development of artistic excellence. There may be some connection, however, between the cleverness of the Council of Ten and their management of a society that was symbolised luxuriantly by artistic emblems. The control and manipulation of artists was achieved by encouraging rivalry between them. That the Council felt artists were well under control is illustrated by their tolerance of Titian's friend and portrait subject the notorious and prolific satirist Pietro Aretino. Granted that the large, handsome and openly homosexual Aretino was also a professional blackmailer, it is still significant that he felt Venice was the place he could take refuge. I'd



suggest that it is also significant that the nature of his art was satire. I've never been comfortable being described as a satirist, as I believe the form is intrinsically conservative. It also seems to me that authoritarian societies often promote satire as a distorted but supportive and dependent mirror, hence the abundance of satire in the current United States, or in 1960s Britain.

To return to the subject of artistic rivalry and conservative forces, it is worth noting that a Murdoch newspaper art critic from Australia has been enormously successful in America and recently won Pulitzers for writing books and essays describing enthusiastically the rivalries between modern painters. Associated with this has been an injunction to abandon the internet and interact directly with nature. Granted this was a pre-Covid recommendation, but we should continue to beware of conservative mistrust of those basic and subversive artistic rhythms that constitute the binary digital metre of the internet. These rhythms are so powerful because they link back to the same technical methods used by the early minstrels to memorise and convey information and emotion.

On the subject of the best and least competitive way of paying artists, I would still recommend the method begun by the Whitlam Government's Literature Board in the early 1970s, before the conservative Fraser Government destroyed it. I remember Judith Wright saying that she hoped it would lead to paying writers a small but reliable annual salary, such as was then the practice in the Soviet Union. This, she hoped, would not be discontinued as long as the already published writer produced regular work and was willing to agree to give up any other main employment. The last proviso, I'd suggest, is the key requirement, as it makes the numbers manageable and disposes of any idea that writing is not an honourable profession in itself, and in need of the artist's full attention. In order to undermine that definition, conservative governments appointed to the Literature Board people like Thea Astley, who believed that writers should have other jobs and that the grants were a belittling pension. I very much liked and respected Thea, but it seems to me she was used by people whose inhumanity she would not have shared, and that her own impressive writing career was made discouraging and arduous for her by the competing demands of two different vocations.

One of the dangers of conservative manipulation of artists is the building and then the disappointment of expectant ambition. Even if this is not done deliberately by Intelligence institutions, there is a tendency for oligarchs and publishers to toy with the hopes of artists, for sadistic humour or just the sheer enjoyment of power and the need to distinguish between social classes. There can be a carelessness, an irresponsibility



about such things, too. Arts employers tend to have a much more exact knowledge of the law than artists do, but the final situation in which artists find themselves can also be without income and without rights by accident. It is quite relevant that the true point of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not just the cruelty of the slave owners but that the slaves' first, benign master dies without legally freeing them, and unintentionally condemns them to horror. After I retrieved my copyright from a previous publisher (the last one before my daughter, who is my best publisher) I wondered what would have happened to it otherwise once that publisher retired and perhaps sold it.

One of the most terrible examples of a writer having their hopes raised and being destroyed is that of the Australian poet Henry Kendall. He was led to believe by literary authorities that his writing - which was passionately beautiful - would succeed and that he could trust in it. Instead, he became impoverished, his young daughter Araluen died slowly and plaintively and was buried with other babies in a pauper's grave, and his marriage did not survive. He finally managed to achieve a labouring job, but for the rest of his life, he was pursued by the physical sound of a wailing child. It is too much to ask that an artist have the superhuman wit and self-defences to avoid all the dangers, temptations, indifferences and rivalries that political conservatism has in store. One purpose of this essay is to remind you again of some of them.

In terms of the ploys of conservatives or intelligence agencies, and perhaps on a lighter note, all artists should definitely be braced for what I've come to regard as the Conservative Asset's Hissy Fit and Lateral Accusing Rant. I was just witness to one again very recently. I was thinking of such things anyway because someone on the internet was puzzling as to why so many people he knew who were retired intelligence operatives became so easily frenzied and illogical when contradicted. The answer of course is that the rant response is usually a trained one that can be employed universally when agents or power figures find themselves in a logical pickle. Part of the process is to accuse the recipient of persecution, some social or political crime selected at random, callous indifference to a disaster the ranter is suffering, and then to cut off all communication completely with the suggestion that the recipient is a stalker. That possible tendency for people to perhaps place their mad relatives in positions of artistic or academic authority does account for this performance sometimes, but it tends to be so calibrated and predictable that one has to assume it has a function in professional areas. The last one of these performances I witnessed was when my daughter as a publisher relayed a message to an academic and editor working overseas who had asked to quote me. I declined as elsewhere he'd





discussed one of my Condoleezza Rice poems as if its main importance was whether one should be so rude to American politicians, that he'd misinterpreted the poem perhaps deliberately, that he didn't mention war crimes, and that he'd retweeted a *New York Times* tweet calling Jeremy Corbyn antisemitic. The response was a classic piece of incoherence accusing my daughter of callousness about his and others suffering at the hands of Donald Trump because of Covid (although she hadn't mentioned Trump or Covid and the ranter didn't have Covid) and cutting off any further communication with the threat of legal action. As in all cases of this stylised performance, one was left with a feeling of intense relief without the ranter's intimidating communication, but that would have been the intention.

With that particular small but necessary warning about tactics, it is time we started to round-up and conclude the essay, including another look at Australian government Arts policies. It is important, for example, to examine briefly the implications of the 1994 Paul Keating Creative Nation arts policy, stated at the time as intending to 'pull the threads of Australia's national life together so we can ride the waves of global change and create our own'. Riding the waves of global change is an odd ambition for an artist, particularly as it seems to imply a globalist manipulation of forces that already exist in order to be part of them. Keating saw himself as a cultured man, and was certainly an internationalist nationalist and a capitalist globalist. He had a dislike of laminex tables, but an endearing respect for Jack Lang. Inherent in the Creative Nation concept, however, is pressure on the artist to achieve international success, and to achieve it in certain ways not demanded by a Whitlam-like system of modest secure salaries and reliable work at home. There is also in the Creative Nation concept a conservative momentum to combine art with physical performance and popular science. I am reminded of Brigid Brophy's repugnance at people using 'artistic merit' as a justification for writing about sex - as if there were a need to excuse writing about sex, and as if art were reduced to a disinfectant. In the Keating era, art itself was disinfected by justifications of national glory and interdisciplinary respectability - both inherently competitive in nature. On a personal level, this may have been the beginning of the Australia Council Literature Board's insistence on an outline of specific projects. Applying for a grant, later I was no longer allowed to apply simply 'to write poetry and prose' as a sufficient purpose. There had to be a time-limited costed goal. There was a macrocosmic movement towards a pseudo-scientific criterion about successful results. It is significant that when Leonie Kramer could be entirely open about following Dr Leavis she reiterated his belief that literature should be treated as a scientific



discipline like any other, with mandarins such as herself dictating the science. One of the dangers of these values for an artist is that artists, in so much as they are often trapped in microcosms, often argue 'like a girl' - or like a trapped wife - forced to accept the diction of inappropriate demands and accusations, or deceptions that are merely distractions.

Again, I am also personally reminded of one of my previous publishers' rejection of my beliefs in favour of a Humboldtian inter-disciplinary ideology, with a convenient reverence for 'research', including biography as scientific art. Coupled with this, perhaps inevitably, there is a reverence for literature which is restricted to playing with linguistic and temporal forms, as if this had a scientific idealism or purity. It occurs to me now that there was a deep affinity between Arthur Koestler's and the CIA *Encounter's* interdisciplinary approach and the CIA sponsorship of Pollock's hierarchised abstractions. There is no problem with such a search for stylistic 'purity' as such, but for the artist it often involves a dangerous environment - again, the greater the material rewards, the more lethal is the business.

Significantly, in the face of Covid, sections of the Murdoch Press have been calling on the Morrison Government to emulate Keating's Creative Nation policies. This might be seen as a cunning appeal to conservative nationalism, but Morrison's conservatism, like Trump's, or James Murdoch's, is not globalist. It is easy to interpret its financial championing of Seven West Media, News Corp and Nine against Australian Associated Press as globalist not nationalist, but Morrison is after all 'Scotty from Marketing', as the Twitter hashtag has it, and he no doubt sees them as the boys he cultivates necessarily at the bar after the holiday conference. For empathy with Morrison, one needs to consider how the advertising profession views the artistic profession. There is in advertising an envy of any expression less inhibited and dictated by social conventions - Morrison's religious fundamentalism may exacerbate this envy - and there is a resentment towards any criterion that need not involve commercial success, but above all there is a beady magpie scrutiny to see if any glittering phrases or ideas can be snatched and re-appropriated for direct commercial use. One is dealing with an Andy Warhol soup can universe in reverse, but therefore the focus is microcosmic not global. We should consider here the implications of that in terms of Morrison relegating the arts to a subservient position in a larger portfolio, and to his funding them insufficiently during the Covid emergency. The result, as we've observed, is to further illustrate that much major arts funding will be non-governmental, globalist, insecure and associated with copyright bodies. There might be an expectation that Morrison's grantees would be different in nature from the grantees of



such Councils, but the fact that there is much replication between the two authorities, both preferring similar Worthy Social Causes and possible international awards, indicates that the actual nature of the Government Arts Bureaucracy may still be Keatingesque and internationalist: possibly a reason for Morrison's wish to control them.

The best outcome for artists if they are not to be thrown into glamourised, destructive and vulgar competition for timeframed copyright body grants projects is that the artists come to be regarded as normal long-term government employees whose incomes need replacing or subsidising, and in fact - given the necessities of Covid - that might have most appeal to a magpie marketer like Morrison. He needs the nesting for his eggs, and he wants it nearby and not necessarily in conflict with itself. If I were a Murdoch Pressperson trying to preserve the arts, I'd gamble more on this than on the wistful worldliness of Keating.

On the general subject of conspicuous rivalry between grantees, I'd like to consider with you again the intricate nature of left-wing and right-wing political positioning. We must always keep in mind the CIA's Cord Meyer's 1950s decision to 'Court the Compatible Left'. And indeed in regard to importunate quarterlies, I can't resist suggesting that in them we may not be dealing with the desperate Henry Kendall so much as the character Eve Kendall discussed earlier. For instance, there do seem to be so many Hitchcockian blank cartridges fired at, and in the vicinity of, *Quadrant*. One well-meaning quarterly poetry editor even refused to publish anyone who had been published in *Quadrant*, thus creating a juicily welcome controversy for right-wing critics to gnaw upon and demand the withholding of grants. I taught the talented young editor briefly, and he's not an Intelligence Asset, but it is sometimes annoying that the existence of *Quadrant* has so much Sam Goldberg potential to allow other quarterlies a default Kramer-like acceptable definition. As one would expect, there is the usual amount of aspiring Intelligence influence as elsewhere in quarterlies and online periodicals, but the real nature of their macrocosmic problem may be in their trust in their own left-wing essence.

Regarding blanks, it is interesting that as well as in the Demidenko affair, Gerard Henderson seems willing to be a Cary Grant-style victim for blank cartridges on other occasions. Once, he wrote an ostentatiously scathing criticism of a young reviewer and her benign anarchist subject, who had already been targeted in a previously discussed long campaign by a critic/publisher and a couple of accomplice accomplished poets. It was apparently necessary for the publisher to once again re-define himself politically, so he wrote a series of letters to Henderson in defence



of the benign anarchist. Henderson duly published the lot, seemingly without permission, allowing the publisher to let many on his own mailing list know of his indignation, and to convince several others of it - including the optimistic benign anarchist. I believed it all myself at the time, and applauded the young reviewer when she reported indignantly confronting a rather nonplussed Henderson at a literary awards ceremony. Perhaps at that moment Henderson indeed wondered that it had all gone so far.

One of the dangers of complacency in publications regarding themselves as opposing the right-wing manifests itself in the belief that they can re-appropriate right-wing phrases such as 'conspiracy theory' and use them to their own advantage. But such phrases are born impregnated with inhibition, and are seeded with right-wing ontology and adherence to a right-wing form of reductive logic. For example, the online publication *Crikey* recently recounted conspiracy theories from the present backwards, culminating in 'There have always been conspiracy theorists. What is very different now is the internet. The conspiracy theorists of 1964, with their obsession with communists, their hatred of civil rights and their fear of fluoridation, had far less capacity to connect with each other and encourage and influence each other than modern conspiracy theorists, who exist almost entirely online'.

But the conspiracy theorists in the 1960s who were in constant communication and conspiracy about their obsession with communists and hatred of civil rights were the ubiquitous FBI and the CIA, and it was a lethal business. Somehow, the *Crikey* version ignores this, and also portrays the internet as a dangerous and demented place for individuals, whilst forgetting the openly recruited professional presence on the Internet of a multitude of Intelligence assets whose purpose is to insert their own government position and to sow discord between everyone else at every subtle opportunity. This is something agent provocateurs have always done successfully, however, and the internet often gives a new and powerful opportunity to analyse it. The left-wing appropriation of the phrase 'conspiracy theory' tends to automatically reject any role of government, when it is the role of government with which the left-wing is most concerned.

There is a difficulty in general about the left-wing absorbing the reductive logic of the right-wing. Unlike the right-wing, particularly Intelligence assets, the artistic left-wing have what seems to be a paralysing compulsion to appear to be sane. I wondered if this was the problem with ex-*Overland* editor Jeff Sparrow's frustrating but sincere and respectful



biography of Paul Robeson. Sparrow does not explore fully the arguments, including by Robeson's son, that Robeson's suicidal breakdown in Moscow (at an unexpected party consisting of Russian dissidents) was the result of chemicals administered by Intelligence Services, probably MKUltra. Although more perceptive and engaging than *Encounter*, Sparrow's version of Robeson would be quite compatible with one from *Encounter* in the 1950s, 60s or 70s: that Robeson had already suffered breakdowns, he was so disillusioned by the revelation of Stalinism that he became suicidal and could not restore his health by political activity because his politics had betrayed him - that he was also pressured by his father and the left-wing to maintain the Robeson persona and the pressure was difficult for him.

I asked Sparrow if he was comfortable for the purposes of this essay with being presented as questioning the son's MKUltra version of the Moscow breakdown. He said he was reluctant to be associated with any definite assessment of Robeson's breakdown, but concluded 'I don't think you need to hypothesise a CIA program in order to explain Robeson's breakdown'. The records of MKUltra were destroyed in the Seventies, but Robeson's son regarded the breakdown as remarkably abnormal and cited as evidence the treatment records at the Priory clinic in London over twenty months, where his father received fifty-four treatments of ECT and 'antipsychotics, including insulin coma with doses of 10 to 50 units of insulin, antianxiety drugs, and antidepressants'. In his biography of Robeson, the son says 'I found this combined treatment especially troubling, because it resembled the "mind depatterning" treatment funded by MKULTRA Project, which consisted of "intensive electroshocks, usually combined with prolonged, drug-induced sleep." The similarity is noteworthy because by early 1962 Richard Helms, the creator of the MKULTRA Project, had been elevated to the post of deputy director of plans and was in direct communication with Hoover concerning Paul's health.'

There were funding connections between the Priory staff and the CIA. Robeson's wife finally had him transferred to a clinic in East Berlin.

One of the problems in Sparrow citing Robeson's two earlier breakdowns is that so did the CIA file on his 'Health' - as their files did for many artists, especially any artist they considered a possible candidate for destruction or development. From an Intelligence viewpoint, artists seem in this regard predictably vulnerable as some are likely to have already suffered useful breakdowns and political estrangements, allowing the





construction of a narrative later, and documented targeting of specific weaknesses.

Apart from Sparrow's underestimating Robeson's intellect, strength and resilience - Robeson's last recordings at home are his best, most self-controlled and most masterly - also among his most left-wing - I find the Sparrow version troubling in its typical Australian left-wing literary tendency to attempt to show balance by seeming to accept a right-wing interpretation, even if the emotional tone is compassionate and not doctrinaire in itself. There would have been nothing shocking for Robeson in criticism of Stalin. He was a law graduate and experienced in left-wing circles, and Trotskyites had already been exposing Stalin for years. Robeson's beliefs were not simplistically communist but more eclectic left-wing. His beloved Welsh miners weren't ideologues. *Encounter's* thesis that the left-wing felt pathologically betrayed by Stalin largely applied to communists subsequently employed or used by the CIA. The left-wing in general, such as Nye Bevan or Robeson, had never been simple Stalinists, and anyway would have been unsurprised by any use of brutal methods since World War II, whether it was Stalin killing his generals and peasants, or Churchill bombing Dresden.

Nearing our conclusion, I should anticipate possible criticism of my traditional use of the phrases 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' but I believe they continue to serve their purpose and have enough meaning. Without them, to paraphrase Nye Bevan on the 'middle-of-the-road', we would have to wait for everyone else to declare their positions before we knew where we were. I should also underline that my attitude is not automatically anti right-wing but anti right-wing when it causes artistic conflict or damage. Kris Hemensley, who doesn't regard himself as left-wing, and who has published and championed my work for half a century, said he would have to be the 'dark angel' of this essay, and I replied: 'Of course you can always be my dark angel, but as I've said before I don't think our views are often too far apart. There are all sorts of twists and turns that I expect to discover during the course of my essay - I'm both unnerved and heartened by its prospective length. I'm never as daunted by your political positions as you fear I might be. My focus is on the wider causes of damage and the nature of power in art, and I've never known you to bring about anything but great artistic good.'

One of the things I've had time to consider is why the nature of my work might have become more problematic for some previous publishers. One of them announcing - at my last book launching by their publishing house



- that their carefully negotiated plan of an annual collection was in fact a joke that I had misunderstood still seems to me to be beneath them. But apart from my general stance of equality with power it does seem to me that in particular my increasingly critical presentation of Hillary Clinton may have been awkward for those with long connections to the American Democratic Party, and then to the Council on Foreign Relations, and who had at the time undeclared intentions of further American and global success, complete with access to the *New York Times*. My first depictions of conversations between Clinton and Eleanor Roosevelt were much more charitable than the last, but I was aghast - and showed Eleanor to be aghast - at Clinton's warlike conduct as Secretary of State and her public gloating about the prolonged sodomy-murder of Colonel Gaddafi, who had tried to establish an alternative in his country (now in ruins) to American currency. There was also a history of my work being controversial regarding Israel. The *Dublin Poetry Review* had read in Main Stream Media and asked for my *Positional Asphyxia* poem about the Israeli bombing of Lebanon:

### ***Positional Asphyxia***

Watching the second but not last massacre  
by the Israelis in Qana, my daughter  
hopes that the scores of dead children  
died in their sleep, and I reassure her  
hollowly, 'Perhaps', but I remember  
Thredbo, where the Coroner said some victims  
were alive at first, died later  
of 'Positional Asphyxia'. Families cradling  
limp, lovely, livid Qana children say after  
the bombing at first they heard them  
crying under the concrete. Their asphyxia  
in a tight compartment there perhaps is over,  
while need to breathe safe air in a sealed nation  
traps their enemy, trauma-rigid and forever.

And there was a conflict about it in Dublin. When I offered to withdraw it, my publisher at the time did not object (although the magazine eventually published it when someone in Dublin threatened to walk out) and I think the controversy must have created more apprehension than I realised then. I wonder what I would have done if I had been offered the choice of writing more lyrical, more personal, less political work which was more to the taste of the publishers? I imagined the conversation at the time and was devoted to them, as I've said. But they had too little - or perhaps too



much - respect for me to initiate that conversation. So now I am writing what I was clearly always to write.

With that, as with the Covid crisis, I am thinking again about Tolstoy's 'asked for the most important advice I could give, that which I considered to be the most useful to the men of our century, I should simply say: in the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you.' Judith Rodriguez described my second last publisher's (as I've told you, my last publisher and my best is my daughter) abandoning of me as 'pusillanimity', but I am still a little devoted to them and would rather think sometimes that it may have been patriotism. Nor perhaps would that compliment be rejected by them. Perhaps, like Kim Philby, although not in the same profession, they too will have a final need for acknowledgement and to take a book quietly out onto the balcony, away from all the conflicts and dissembling. It was a lethal business, after all.

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