



The Exegesis

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ABSTRACT

What are the things that shape an individual? Why are the young of all cultures so similar, and why do people, of different periods of history and economic circumstances, grow and age differently? How much of this is luck?

George Orwell, in *Coming up for Air*,¹ describes people born in the 1890s as a very unlucky generation. Orwell made this statement during the Great Depression. He was aware that many of the workless in London dole queues had also served on the Western Front two decades previously, and predicted that these same people, and their children, would be called upon to fight Nazism in a few years. Orwell observed that the outcome of the future conflict could depend on the will of those embittered Londoners to struggle yet again.

In contrast to Orwell's resilient souls, about to endure another war, Larry is a member of a very lucky generation.

*We were the generation who were going to enjoy the fruits of their sacrifices.
We were never going to ever have to fight a war or miss a meal. (6)*

For Larry this turns out to be true, but the circumstances, that made this fortuitous state of affairs possible, crumble away during his lifetime. Such descents from the ideal are common in human societies, but this time it is accompanied by an increasing diaspora and resultant loss of identity.

I will try to ascertain how much of Larry's experience is traceable to the unfinished business of Empire; this will involve a brief history of colonialism, and an examination of Postcolonial Theory. Finally I will attempt to examine the role of the immigrant in an era of permanent nomadism.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or any other institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

SIGNED _____

DATE 21 / 3 / 04

¹ G. Orwell, *Coming Up for Air* (London: Secker & Warberg, 1986)

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Introduction

1.1 Special Risks: a kind of novel.

I will never write a novel of this type again. The story of a life extended over fifty years is inevitably a tale of everyone's journey from youthful vigour towards decrepitude, and it gives a tone of pessimism to a novel that is intended to entertain. To make matters worse, *Special Risks* has the characteristics of a Picaresque tale and shares some of the cynicism of the genre.

Voltaire's *Candide*¹ is probably the best known of the type.

'Do you believe,' asked Candide, 'that men have always massacred each other as they do today? That they have always been liars, traitors, ingrates, thieves, weaklings, sneaks, backbiters, gluttons, drunkards, misers, climbers, killers, calumniators, sensualists, fanatics, hypocrites, and fools?'

'Do you believe,' said Martin, 'that hawks have always eaten pigeons when they could get them?''²

Candide, in the above quotation, repeats the word 'always,' and Martin tosses it back to him. The innocent Candide encounters slavery, war, torture, mutilation, rape, and massacre, but he clings to the idea that human wickedness is a temporary aberration. It takes a lot of journeys and conversations to convince Candide of the permanence of human frailty.

The journeys of a Picaro, or Picara, must have a randomness about them. Moll of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is a picara not only because of travel, but because her life and loves are a series of chances. The same can be said of Becky Sharp in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Picaras tend to be more knowing than Picaros. The gaining of knowledge is a central aspect of the genre.

The traveller witnesses the world through the eyes of an observant nobody. When the formula works, the reader learns a kind of alternative history that bears a resemblance to all ages.

Becky lives in a Regency England where, as in our own era, imperial power, social inequality, and crumpled bed sheets, are interconnected.

¹ Voltaire. *Candide*. trans W Adams. New York: Norton & Co, 1991.

² Voltaire. 46.

The great event that Larry is a witness to is the Australian post-war immigration program. This enormous social experiment created contemporary Australia. If Larry's account seems to be largely about people behaving badly, my excuse is that picaresque tales tend to be like that.

1.2 Mobility

Larry is a creature of the second half of the twentieth century and the circumstances of that time. During Larry's recall of childhood reading he was able to state that:

*A lot of people dreamed of journeys. Most of the population didn't travel much but they read books about the adventures of others. (8)**

I was about two-thirds through the first draft when the manuscript started to display mobility comparable to the travels of Larry.

The childhood of Larry is not entirely autobiographical, but a few family crimes are mentioned. My relatives are a widely dispersed and multinational tribe of people who rarely communicate, but I thought it wise to check if the text would cause annoyance. I emailed the first seventy pages to Wilma, a niece in England, and waited for cries of rage to come echoing across the equator. Wilma took the manuscript to read while holidaying on the Greek island of Corfu. Two weeks later my niece sent me an email to say she liked it. It seems that all of those embarrassing stories about wartime black-marketeering and smuggling had become romantic history. My younger relative is as separated from World War II as I am from World War I. Wilma remembers some of the characters as respectable, and respected, people in their eighties.

My niece then, without telling me, posted the manuscript to a relative in France. What followed was a strange silence from the French wing. I wonder if some of the comments

* Quotations from *Special Risks* will be cited by page number only.

made, by Larry, about Paris during the Algerian Crisis, or Jane's disparaging remarks about French Fashion, have caused offence.

Special Risks has become an international unfinished text. I am suffering from manuscript envy; it is having a more exciting life than I am. In my wilder moments of fancy, I imagine it sipping absinthe in a Montmartre café or skiing by night across the mountainous Greek-Albanian frontier. I do not plan to send any more fragments to Wilma; I can't take the stress. My copy of the text, the one that hasn't been to France or Greece, is now complete.

The manuscript's wanderlust is symptomatic of the age. It is possible that the sense of displacement that Larry and others feel is not just due to the new mobility of people over the last thirty years, but also because inanimate objects are part of this diaspora. I live with few articles that are made locally. The term 'local,' in the sense of a district with its own architecture, food, music, and customs, has lost a lot of its power. Larry may be of the last generation that could get on a train or plane to somewhere different.

1.3 Structure

Immigrants lead dual inner lives. In András Dezséry's novel, *The Amphibian*,³ the central character, Antal Kétlaki, is repeatedly reliving memories of Hungary in such places as a Sydney café or while visiting the dentist. The use of flashbacks, triggered by present experience, has merit in illustrating the bifocal life of an exile, but I felt that it did not suit Larry in *Special Risks*.

Larry is an immigrant son of an immigrant, of Maltese and English parentage, and because of this much of his heritage is beyond recall. Larry instead has a kind of mental scrapbook of family stories and schoolbook history. I turned this into a parallel text, entitled *The Book of Beginnings*, positioned at the beginning of each chapter.

³ A, Dezséry. *The Amphibian*. Adelaide: Dezséry Ethnic Publications, 1981.

One or two of the readers of my drafts have found this irritating, especially when *The Book of Beginnings* sometimes balloons from a few lines to several pages. My response has been to tell them to just read the main text as an adventure story. It works quite well although the reader does have to dip into *The Book of Beginnings* to identify some of the characters. One approach for a reader, if it is a problem, could be to skim-read the life of Larry in *Special Risks* and then return and read the entire novel.

2 Origin and Development

2.1 Larry the Child

It is a common practice to open the first act of ballets and musicals with ensemble dancing or singing before introducing the main protagonists. *Special Risks* begins also with dancers and actors in the bombed city of London. My intention is to present the novel to the reader as an entertainment, but just off-stage are some of the barbarities of the twentieth century. A war has just ended and a child has reason to have hope.

Our home was a room that led out into a back alley; but in that street there was colour and action, and the rebirth of glamour. (1)

Larry grows up with a post-war faith in modernism. My twentieth century traveller is raised on a view that the world is, if not perfectible, at least improvable. It is as though the aspirations of the Age of Enlightenment, and Fabianism, are bearing fruit.

The newly formed United Nations Organisation was going to foster Peace throughout the World. New technologies were going to guarantee prosperity. Legislation would enforce a fair distribution of wealth. (7)

The rest of the novel became a demonstration of the way these hopes did not (could not?) come to fulfilment.

The un-named island in *The Book of Beginnings* is loosely based on Gozo, an offshore island of Malta. When I was there it was a rather backward place where goats were milked at the front door every morning. I have been told it is now covered in holiday homes owned by YUMMies, (Young Upwardly Mobile Maltese) and *Coca Cola* has replaced wine as the most popular recreational drink. Colonialism has many faces.

The episode of the gypsy camp, when Larry was a teenager, may just seem to be a glimpse into the darker side of English rural life, but it has a relevance to Australia. The *Modus Operandi* of drunken men going into camps with pick handles was not unknown in Australia

fifty years ago. I have no means of proving it, but I suspect the settlers learnt to treat Aboriginals in this way from experience with Gypsies in England.

2.2 Family

In the beginning of *Special Risks*, Larry is an English child with an English mother and they reside in England. His father was born in a British Colony and has been an English resident for many years. There is nothing ambiguous or even unusual about this. To quote Larry: *'I have no childhood memory of suffering prejudice on the grounds of racial origin.'*(5)

Larry has just returned from a period in Malta where he gained a new perspective from meeting his Maltese relatives and living in a different kind of society; and also awareness that he has another nationality. This is not a perception encouraged by Joe, Larry's father. *'When I spoke to him in Maltese he did not reply and I lost the language.'*(4)

Two events challenge Larry's sunny view of a new post-war world. The arrival of Victor leads to a conversation between Larry and Elizabeth in which he learns of Nina's criminality in time of war. Secondly Larry is told of the Gypsy and the returning dog, and out of it stems an intensely historicist view of the world.

There are people who travel and those who stay. Between them there is often war. The reason they fight is because they do not understand each other's history and do not want to. (10)

Larry is one of the world's bit-players and never aspires to be any more than that. Larry is told by the theatre doorman that only *'the big names, like Miss Fonteyn, have a home,'* (2) and assumes that he will live in a suitcase. When Larry does well in a factory in his teen years, he remarks that he was in *'dangerous risk of promotion.'*(28)

Apart from *'Miss Fonteyn,'* Larry does not mix with the rich or famous. He does, during the Vietnam War, shake the hand of the Assistant Secretary of State of the United States, but

the bureaucrat was barely conscious at the time. Superficially it appears that Larry is someone who swims at the shallow end of life's pool; but psychologically he is coping with a lot of unfinished business, and most of it is to do with real and surrogate parents.

Young Larry has two older males as role models: Joe his father, and Paul the grandfather. Nina is quick to perceive this when they first meet. *She ruffled my hair and asked jokingly, 'Are you Joe's boy or Paul's boy?'* (40) Joe is the perfect migrant; he sails away from Malta, reinvents himself, marries an Englishwoman, and takes on all the vices and virtues of the English. Paul is a Maltese smuggler who has a kind of fox-and-hound relationship with the English.

Larry plays Paul's role during the Vietnam years. He does it quite well, but requires a lot of help from Peru. This is in character, Larry spends a lot of his time receiving female advice, and it may be due to having so many surrogate mothers. When the war ends, Larry realises that he cannot play the part of rascal indefinitely. The rogue persona of Larry dies when his look-alike pursuer is killed in the Sydney Airport car park.

Larry tries to play Joe's role when he returns to Australia and fails disastrously. Salt is rubbed into the wound when Joe came over to Australia for a visit and got on famously with Larry's in-laws.

The psychological fatherhood of Larry is not simple. In Voltaire's *Candide*, Pangloss plays the role of male elder. He is always ready to give advice that is philosophically sound, but of little practical use. Larry has Joe and Paul, and a series of older men that he meets while travelling. Most of them are eccentrics like Mad Alf, in Soho, Alfred, on Bruny Island, the old man walking a dog in Monterey, and the Kings Cross preacher. Bragg is simply dangerous.

Larry makes an attempt to understand Joe. Through the novel Larry gradually learns the emotional price a person pays when they become a perfect migrant. And he can only learn by

making a similar journey. It could be also argued that the travels of Larry are an attempt to flee his father. The encounters with older men are reminders of patriarchy.

The Oedipal solution is to kill the father. The murder of Mad Alf functions as a surrogate patricide. It happens twice. Young Larry learns of Alf's death in Soho and is quite unmoved by it, but then journeys on into adulthood. In Adelaide, Larry receives Michael's letter admitting guilt and giving gory details. There is no hint of criticism, on Larry's part, for what is arguably a brutal piece of thuggery. Michael himself feels no guilt; it was done by his Damien persona, *a dark angel*. (198) Larry then re-meets Alison in her persona as a vampire and they become lovers.

Larry has three childhood mothers: Elizabeth, Nina, and Carmen. There is no unfinished business in the relationship with Carmen. It ends with them both throwing a piece of lace into the sea. It is sad for the pair, but the last rite serves its function and Larry never seeks another Carmen.

Nina merely disappears without a goodbye and the memory of this remains with Larry throughout his English childhood. In the Soho pub, Larry thinks he has found a trace of Nina. That night, he and Jane become lovers. Jane has the same entrepreneurial spirit as Nina and the same readiness to go her own way. Jane and Larry are both restless young people but their aspirations do not coincide. She disappears from his life as suddenly as Nina.

Peru is like Larry's biological mother, Elizabeth, in personality. When they meet in Basle she immediately gives him some motherly advice, and continues to do it over succeeding decades. Peru treats Larry as her 'Lamb,' and he doesn't mind at all. It is the most sustained relationship of his life.

There is an odd symbiosis between one who apparently has no family and the other who has too much. Peru has a preoccupation with *The Book of Beginnings*. At first she wants to

know more about this strange clan of Maltese, but later sees it as something to be left behind before Larry can start a new life. As Peru said during the final meeting in New Zealand:

'Throw away The Book of Beginnings. All the book shows is that you are the product of an Empire that no longer exists.' (117)

Peru gains energy by living in the present. To her, it is important to have a name but if today's name is different from yesterday, that is cool. It is the same with the world, like an explorer she names things as they are encountered. As Peru told Larry when they met in San Francisco:

'If something is small and Oriental, you call it an incense burner.'
'Even if I don't know what it is?'
'Especially then. When you are exploring unknown territory you name everything you see. It is a way of making the unfamiliar familiar.'
'Then I name you Peru.'
'I like it. Let's find a bar, and drink to Terra Incognita and my new name.' (66)

Peru's attitude to identity is not a foolish approach to life, but Larry is incurably historicist. He is trapped in a web of male lineage.

In my father's family, people had not only family names but also patronymics. I was Larry son-of-Joe, My father was Joe son-of-Paul, My grandfather was Paul son-of-John. (33)

The young Larry becomes aware, with the arrival of the inarticulate Victor, that past crimes effect present lives. In the tale of the Gypsies and the returning dog, Larry realises that minorities are trapped in the histories of others. Larry maintains a strongly historicist view of the world for the rest of his life. This is manifested in the inset stories of the *Book of Beginnings*. These fragments are not intended to be read as history. The dominant group has a history; people without power just have family stories. Malta is an ideal place to set a story about people without power and to tell how they cope with this state of affairs.

The weakness of living in the present, in the manner of Peru, is that you have to accept the stereotypes that others pin on you. Larry learns this on first arrival in Sydney where he is misrecognised repeatedly by Australians. This is not a problem for a tourist or an explorer but

it creates difficulties when Larry tries to infiltrate Australian society. Larry marries and learns that the in-laws look upon his humanity as negotiable. Larry needs *The Book of Beginnings* to prove that he exists.

2.3 Maltese Characters

The role of Nina is to give a voice to the women of Southern Europe in the period 1945-48. In the three years between the fall of the axis powers and the introduction of the Marshall Plan, Europe was without the normal economic and social institutions necessary for civilised existence. Currencies were worthless, roads and bridges destroyed, cities in ruins, the allies supplied food erratically, and defeated soldiers were reduced to banditry. Southern Europe in 1946 bore some resemblance to Iraq in 2003.

Many women kept themselves and their families alive by running black marketing networks. The currency of allied occupied Europe was for three years the cigarette. Items of trade could be anything, but gold, petrol, radios, food, antiques, and sex, figured prominently in the merchandise. In 1949, with the input of billions of dollars of American Aid, the normal pattern of European society was restored. People went back to their respectable domestic lives and pretended nothing had happened. I suppose it was the silence of shame although I don't know who it was who was supposed to be ashamed. As Larry writes in *The Book of Beginnings*:

Nina was someone that people were silent about. Nina had gold bangles on her arms and ran the local tavern. I did not find this strange; women seemed to be running Europe at the time. History is silent about that too. (69)

The number of people who remember this time must be decreasing every year; I was five and six when I was a witness. Nina is someone who does not return to respectability but successfully continues a life of crime.

Carmen is based on an aunt I knew in Malta as a child. Carmen is reported in the novel as being dead, when Larry returns from the Pacific. My Aunt Assunta, at the time of writing, is alive and almost a hundred years old. I remember Assunta as someone who worked constantly at what she was good at, and incorporated into her lace a lot of the anguish stemming from two world wars and numerous crazy relatives. It may be the secret of a successful life. It may even be a definition of Art.

I had a grandfather called Paul. I never knew Paul, but, as evidence of the respect felt for him, the name has repeatedly cropped up in the family ever since he died. In politically oppressed societies the division between the brigand and the freedom fighter is poorly defined. As Peru said in San Francisco: *'I want to know why Paul was so notorious. Was he just a crook or was he political?'* (41) Australians have been asking the same question about Ned Kelly for a hundred and twenty years. Possibly who such people are is less important than the myths we build around them.

2.4 Friends

Peru was the first character I created for the story. She is based on a woman I met in Switzerland when I was nineteen. The lady was wearing a card pinned to her shirt with 'Peru' on it. The label wearer complained that she was bored and her feet hurt. We had a short conversation and I never met her again. I believe that my original Peru did come from that country. She remains in my mind as someone with a label but not an identity. Out of this memory came a character without a past or a name, but still with a lot to say.

Soho was full of ambitious young Michaels and Janes in the 1950s. They were members of a watershed generation. Their parents loved Bing Crosby, but the children enthused about Rock-n-Roll. The parents thought only rich people were allowed to dress fashionably; the children created styles of clothing that the rich dared not wear. The parents were scarred by

the hunger of the 1930s; the children had never missed a meal in their lives. The parents worried about dropping their aitches, but the children made a point of letting theirs fall like autumn leaves. These teenagers were the first generation to live from infancy under the threat of nuclear destruction. The Bomb tended to focus their minds on present pleasures. Michael and Jane are composites of adolescent Londoners of the era.

I at first wanted to let Jane speak like a Londoner, but was advised against it on the grounds that it made her into a comic character. I accepted the advice reluctantly even though I knew it was sound. I used to talk like that and didn't regard it as comic.

Alison is also an example of a type, but not one I especially liked at the time. I remember them as daughters of the rich who imitated a life of colourful bohemian poverty in London and Paris. Strangely enough, Alison evolves into a likeable intelligent character. The fact that Alison disguises herself as a vampire at the end of the novel seems like malice on my part, but it has roots.

In the mood of egalitarianism following WW-II, death duties were introduced that had the effect of breaking up many of the old estates of the county landowners. A few of the vacant country mansions were rented by film companies, the most famous of which was *Hammer Films*, and made Dracula movies in them. Alison's camouflage is also a statement about her heritage and its demise.

All of Larry's friends are to some extent creatures of disguise.

'Look at me and what do you see?' said Jane. 'A face, a pair of hands and legs. The rest is clothes. That's what everybody sees. I could be a Nun or a street tart. Who I am is how I look. Clothing is magic!' (17)

Jane's behaviour is understandable; it was usually a requirement of mid-twentieth century women to wear camouflage if they wished to live independently.

Michael's precocious suavity, and name change, was the standard cover of the homosexual in the nineteen fifties. His sexual preference, in a society where such conduct

was illegal, required him to play the role of sophisticated urban outlaw. It was a case of a disguise becoming a designer label. The style was popularised by performers such as Mick Jagger and David Bowie in the sixties. Michael fitted perfectly into the music industry.

Peru's camouflage is so complete that she seems to be the only one who knows her identity. Peru thinks it is important to have a name but doesn't care what it is. Her attitude to nationality and national loyalty are similarly practical but uninvolved. To Peru these things have nothing to do with identity.

Peru perceives Larry to be a product of a dead empire, rather like the Caribbean Londoners or the Algerian French. She gives advice based on this assumption when they part for the last time.

'There are millions like you all over the world; some of you speak French and others English, but you are all the same. You all have dark complexions, bright minds, and no idea who you are.'

'Who am I?'

'I don't know, but the answer doesn't lie in nationality. One day there may be a world citizenship and the problem will disappear. Until then you will always be on the outer. Get used to it and enjoy yourself; your foreignness gives you an enigmatic charm that some women find attractive.' (117)

2.5 Soho

I worked in the London district of Soho from 1957 through to 1960 and the experience has stayed with me for life. I was, at fifteen, too innocent to wonder how young women with working class accents could afford to own sports cars and fur coats; William Blake saw angels in Soho streets, and so did I. The Police may have been mildly concerned with the district's propensity for vice, but that was their job. To me, it was pure theatre. The Law may have raised an occasional eyebrow at the quantity of stolen merchandise in the markets. To me, the markets were a feast of colour and wit. I now realise that my stupidity protected me. I was

perceived as being too dumb to be a threat, and too poor to exploit, and so was treated with great kindness.

I may seem to labour too much on William Blake in *Special Risks*, but his way of life was so typical of Soho people as they are and were. Blake's reluctance to leave the district was still a characteristic of the descendants of Huguenots in the 1950s. The fact that Blake's parents were hosiers and glove-makers was also typically Soho.

There is a preoccupation with clothing in *Special Risks* manifested by Larry and Jane. My reason is to show that their lives were influenced by the culture of Soho for the rest of their lives. I remember, when working in the district, that care had to be taken when traversing the pavements to avoid being knocked over by trolleys of jackets and gowns. Soho was a centre for the fashion, and tat, trade in the fifties, and this continued with the Carnaby Street phenomenon in the sixties and seventies. 'Tat' was a term for clothing considered daring or in bad taste depending on your point of view. Today's tat could be tomorrow's fashion.

The districts of Mayfair and Soho were opposing poles with regard to clothing. Soho designers looked on the Mayfair ones as being too pedestrian because they catered for county customers and only changed styles once every season. People in the Mayfair houses wrote off Soho fashions as being too-racy-by-far and very close to tat. They pronounced the word with a long 'a' so that it sounded like tart. I was sometimes sent to Mayfair salons, to deliver printed work, and found them daunting places. The receptionists would talk in loud voices about going to the Hunt on the weekend; I now realise that they were as insecure as I was.

Mayfair imitated Paris styles, whereas Soho's clothing frequently showed the influence of New York and Milan. The British were proud of their tailoring but slavishly imitated other centres when it came to style for women. The designers of Jane's generation started to change this.

The view that clothing is unimportant to the culture may stem from it being traditionally of interest to women and the young, and if this is so it is contemptible. The idea that last week's fashion is dead-dead-dead is the quintessence of Modernism. Larry, Michael, and Jane are products of their time. As Jane says in the shop:

'Two hundred years ago, you and I would have been peasants living on turnips and sewing ourselves into smocks for the winter; now we can be anything because we can wear anything.' (24)

I have no intention of getting involved in a debate on whether the Soho preoccupation with fashion was evidence of female enslavement to male fantasies. To the designers, fashion was an industry and a craft. For the wearers there was a delight in luxury after a decade of wartime austerity, and clothing also seemed to be a way of establishing hierarchy between women. To quote Jane again: *'Style has nothing to do with impressing men.'* (30) Now that it has become normal for women to be in the professions, fashion may have become less important as a means of showing status. I do not have an opinion on the subject.

I was a lot less aware than Larry of the history of the district. I did not fully realise the importance of the Huguenot connection; I knew that Soho was the only part of Britain where Bastille Day was celebrated, but dumbly never considered asking why at the time.

2.6 The Pacific

The Pacific episodes are based on observation while a computer technician in the region. The oddest part of the experience was the constant changing of employers while doing the same job and being employed on one contract. It gave glamour to what was really a very prosaic job. Thousands of men and women from America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Britain – Anglos of a feather – spent the war travelling between vaguely defined jobs assisting the military machine. Many of these people had second occupations and I base some

of Larry's experiences on them. I did know a butterfly smuggler; the passage of an insect from Christchurch to Los Angeles is not a coy metaphor for the drug trade.

I have nothing to say on drug smuggling. Heroin use by soldiers received a lot of press during the Vietnam War; I don't want to be boring, but I suspect that the predominant drug of the conflict was alcohol. This belief is based on meetings with members of the American Forces in transit and on bases. Military personnel and contractors alike drank *Jack Daniels* as though it was tea. I have been told that the Pacific chapters of *Special Risks* have a dreamy unreal quality: blame it on Black Jack.

In some cases personal experience was unhelpful. This was especially so with the murder in Sydney Airport car park. I wrote the piece after reading other authors. I do not like the exploding eyeball and jet of arterial blood school of writing; it communicates nothing of the sense of waste that I was trying to impart. Raymond Chandler's uncomplicated neat round hole, made by a blunt nosed 0.38, is preferable, but his private detectives philosophise too much afterwards. I settled on the John le Carre approach in which such crimes are perpetrated with speed and grace, and the action quickly moves on to other things. I kept the murder simple and it worked.

2.7 The Tidal Wave

Infiltrators have to face and accept the absurdities of the society in which they live. I used the example of the Great Adelaide Tidal Wave because I witnessed the events as they unfolded. I was working as a computing assistant in the Seismology Section of the Physics Department at the University of Adelaide. I am still not sure as to why it happened or even if there was one reason. My explanation in the novel, that it was an anxiety about boat people, was picked because I thought that would be acceptable to Larry. The problem is not that there isn't an answer but there are a multiplicity of them, and they are all plausible.

It may have been a response by a conservative community to social change. The Dunstan Government had recently liberalised laws on homosexuality and abortion, and many members of minority religious groups may have felt that Adelaide would be subjected to God's wrath because of it. There was also a best seller in the preceding year, entitled *The Jupiter Effect*.⁴ The book argued that an approaching alignment of planets would create a gravitational effect that would lead to an apocalyptic increase in earthquakes and tidal waves on Earth. You also have to take into account the Australian love of a good joke. The idea of taking a really silly idea and pushing it as far as it will go, to see what happens, has appeal after the third beer.

I met a journalist in a wine bar about a month after the event and asked him why the media encouraged the hysteria. He shrugged his shoulders and said, 'not a lot happens in Adelaide just after Christmas.'

What I find puzzling is the silence that followed. I believe that Don Dunstan's memoir, *Felicia*,⁵ contains the only published account of this wave of hysteria. If a panic of this kind had happened in London or New York an entire genre of literature would have grown around the event. I believe this indifference to our own history is because we don't believe it is important, and the lack of self-analysis stems from the colonial experience.

The Great Adelaide Tidal Wave must be seen in the context of a city that loves rumours. Dunstan himself had the latter part of his Premiership marred by gossip. I did consider including more of Dunstan in the novel, because he was such a central figure in the politics of the time, but felt there were special risks in writing about someone whose memory is still loved and hated in Adelaide. I found *Felicia* a disappointing book; it is a typical politician's memoir, and full of self-justification. I hope that there will one day be a definitive biography of the man, but I am not optimistic.

⁴ John Gribben & Stephen Plagemann. *The Jupiter Effect*. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

⁵ D. Dunstan. *Felicia*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981.

One thing that was learned from the Great Adelaide Tidal Wave was that the Press could be relied upon to report on issues without honesty. This was demonstrated a decade later during the rise of the One Nation Party.

2. 8 Hansonism

The Hanson phenomena 1996-1998 was a demonstration of how far a politician can go without policies. I believe that in American politics there is a precise electoral percentage called the bigot vote. A member of Congress makes one speech during a campaign that advocates putting women back into the kitchen and internment for AIDS sufferers, and then has this percentage in the pocket. The politician may spend the rest of the campaign supporting progressive social policies but will keep the reputation for being a sound conservative. Thanks to the electoral campaign of 1998 we now know that the Australian bigot vote is 11%.

The latter part of *Special Risks* tries to demonstrate the effect the political campaign had on migrants and the interaction between the Australian-born and immigrants. Many of the conflicts were between people who had known each other for decades

I did not include much comment on Pauline Hanson in *Special Risks* because there was nothing of substance promulgated in the Media. It was a kind of boutique Fascism. The Press was as interested in Hanson's appearance as they were in her political beliefs. Newspaper commentary under a front-page photo would tell that Hanson was wearing a new dress and on what occasion it was being worn, and little else. It seems that a proportion of the population were being trashed in the streets so that one politician could display her hairstyle.

The phenomenon stemmed from a change in focus by many governments, around the world. In the 1980s, the interest of government altered from social justice to economic growth. The change was sold to the public by promises of lower taxes, and generally these

promises were kept. Less revenue inevitably meant less services. Provincial Australia suffered greatly from a decline in infrastructure. Hanson found a ready ear from small communities that had lost bank branches, transport links and communications services. I have no idea how immigration, foreign aid, and the United Nations Organisation became blamed for this. Hansonism was an attack on the way size and complexity effect simple lives.

One Nation became an umbrella organisation for conspiracy theorists, survivalists, gun enthusiasts, xenophobes, and the weak minded. The 1998 election was the first in which the Internet played a role in Australia. Many One Nation members seemed to gain a lot of their ideas from the wilder American websites. At one stage in the campaign Pauline Hanson was supporting the right to bear arms, apparently unaware that there is no such constitutional right in Australia. The criticism of Federal assistance for Aboriginals was an attack on help that any impoverished Australian can receive. The Media and One Nation fed off each other; the newspapers needed copy and Hanson craved publicity; it led to an escalating pattern of extremist one-liners.

The Media loved Hanson until the Queensland State Election. One Nation gained twenty-four percent of the vote and the Press realised that the unthinkable could happen. To quote Peru:

If they made her they will destroy her. The law of gravity applies to political publicity in the U.S., and I expect it is the same in Australia – the build-up is automatically followed by the tear-down . (246)

2.9 The Volk

The part of the novel that covers the increase in racial violence in Australia in the 1990s was based on observation, partly through involvement in an anti-Hanson group and also by merely walking down the street wearing a dark complexion. I was lucky not to receive injury, an

acquaintance had both of his legs broken; perpetrators of such bashings are rarely apprehended. I am not suggesting that One Nation supporters carried out these crimes, most Hansonists were beyond the age of street violence, but they gave racial prejudice respectability by treating it as a right. 'The Volk,' of interest to Larry and Alison, is loosely based on a neo-Nazi organisation called National Action.

Adelaide, during the nineties, had the most active (no pun intended) branch of National Action in Australia; it was led by a Michael Brander with the support of a few dozen skinheads. Small groups of Australian neo-Nazis have repeatedly popped-up over the decades. I was living in Sydney, in the sixties, during the erratic rise and fall of Brian Raven and his 'storm-troopers.' The NSW Police kept this neo-Nazi group in abeyance by a technique of repeatedly raiding homes of members for drugs, stolen goods, and guns, and finding them.

In 1996, Adelaide Police began a similar series of raids on National Action.⁶ I am usually not in favour of Police harassment of citizens, but I feel that it couldn't have happened to a more appropriate bunch of people.

Larry's fears about the rise of 'the Volk,' after the 1998 election, were not justified. The old extreme Right, such as National Action and The League of Rights, has a preoccupation with Jewry that is not generally shared by One Nation supporters or rural gun lobbyists. The desecration of some seventy gravestones in the Jewish section of Adelaide's West Terrace Cemetery, 1996, produced the usual 'it must be the work of kids' response that innocent people give when faced with the possibility of home grown Fascism. Australia is a country that has had two Jewish Governors General, Sir Isaac Isaacs and Sir Zelman Cowen, and the Jewish minority is a respected part of our society. It is, of course, no consolation to the Jewish community that vandalism of schools and synagogues tend to coincide with Hitler's birthday.

Larry connects the increase in political violence with the loss of work security created by the new economics, but that is nothing more than a guess. My view is that many of the perpetrators were incapable of explaining why they practised vandalism and assault on minorities. Some of the crimes were possibly a form of initiation of an individual into a group by 'blooding,' or a way of the group establishing territory like a dog marking a tree. There may be, as in the case of the unfortunate Kevin, a sad need to belong to a tribe beneath it all.

A full analysis of the rise in hate crime during the nineties is beyond the scope of this essay or the novel. The subject and the period are dealt with more fully in an anthology of essays, *Faces of Hate*, produced by Hawkins Press. It includes chapters on increased violence against Aboriginals, Lesbians, and Gay men, which I do not cover in the novel due to lack of direct experience. The entire anthology is worth reading, but the chapter on intimidation of Aboriginal and Maori prisoners by warders in H-block of Pentridge Prison, 'Hysteria and Hate' by Chris Cuneen, is sufficient reason for buying the book.⁷

During the mid and late nineties I inhabited a strange split world in which part of my life was with people who were being targeted in the streets and the rest was among the middle class on a university campus, where expressions of prejudice were uncommon and usually carefully phrased.

2. 10 Larry as an Australian

It was at the university that the character of Larry evolved. Larry is someone whose mere presence arouses a feeling of unease among a host population. What Australians seem to find most disturbing is Larry's ethnic ambiguity. This is not a difficulty unique to the people of this country. There is an Italian saying: *Inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato*. (The Italianised

⁶ Reported in *The Advertiser*, 6 February 1996 and 6 September 1996.

Englishman is a devil incarnate). Bearing in mind the success of Australia's post-war immigration program, cultural ambiguity is something that Australians are going to have to get used to. Young couples strolling hand-in-hand through shopping malls don't seem to think it a problem.

I do want to make one thing clear: Larry is an Australian. He may refer to Australians as some sort of hostile other, when placed under pressure, but he has made all the legal and social moves necessary to qualify as a member of Australian society. He does feel that there is a lack reciprocity from those born here, but I leave it to the reader to decide on the truth of this opinion.

A novel written by a migrant, about a migrant, is understandably assumed to be autobiographical. In response I quote from the preface of András Dezséry's novel *The Amphibian*.

He is not identical with me, nor with any one of my dear readers. However, I should be pleased if you felt that we are kindred souls who in these 'historic times' consume their days like the beads of a rosary,...⁸

The Amphibian is a good title. So many of us live in more than one culture. It should be regarded as commonplace. Why is it not?

⁷ C. Cuneen . 'Hysteria and Hate,' *Faces of Hate*. editors: C. Cuneen, D.Frasier, S. Tomsen. Sydney: Hawkins Press, 1997.

⁸ A. Dezséry. *The Amphibian* . Adelaide: Dezséry Ethnic Publications, 1981. ii.

3 Aspects of Diaspora

3.1 An Anthropologist's View of his Hometown

A Swedish Social Anthropologist, Ulf Hannerz, in *Transnational Connections*,⁹ writes about his own country, and gives the point of view of a host nation to immigration. From this perspective immigrants are just a visible manifestation of the globalism that he feels is undermining Swedish identity.

He argues that cultural changes emanate from the planet's 'world cities.' Hannerz's list of these conurbations is Tokyo, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, New York, London, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Cairo, Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mexico City, and San Paulo.

World cities come and go in importance; Vienna would have qualified a hundred years ago; Miami is picked for its connection with the Caribbean and Latin America; whatever the selection, the argument is that a dozen or so centres, with their polyglot populations, generate changes that the rest of the world imitate.

The mechanism is that all of these cities are transnational. The inhabitants are physically present for large or brief periods of time, but, through personal history or the nature of the work they do, they each have a strong tie to some other part of the world. These cosmopolitans need not be the majority of the population but they must be sufficient in number for the city to qualify as a world centre. There are different biases in these cities. Centres such as Zurich or Tokyo may attract more international financiers and engineers.

Some cities carry large third world populations within first world boundaries. Los Angeles has the largest Mexican population outside of Mexico, the second largest metropolitan Chinese population outside of China, the largest Korean population outside of Korea, the largest Filipino population outside of the Philippines. New York can, metaphorically, be called a 'Caribbean city.' It has more Caribbean people than the combined populations of Kingston,

Port-of Spain, and San Juan. Although there are millionaire entrepreneurs among these guest populations, they are largely low wage service workers.

A smaller group who often have a high profile in the world cities are the artists. They travel to the centres where there is a market, or at least appreciation. Paris and New York are magnets to painters, writers and musicians. London is a smaller player, although it is often the first port of arrival for Commonwealth artists.

Then there are the academics and scientists who cross the world to read papers, do research and teach.

Lastly there are the tourists, fast moving consumers who are changed by the world city and change it, and rapidly take the experience home.

There is a radiating pattern of influence from the world cities to smaller national capitals. Hannerz uses his native Stockholm as an example of the hundreds of peripheral cities that undergo what he calls 'double creolisation.'

For hundreds of years Sweden had an empire that extended from the Atlantic Ocean to Russia, and it still is an important trading nation in the Baltic region. Because of this sphere of influence, Swedish seaports have populations that originate from many parts of Europe. The border between Sweden and Finland was only guarded during the period of the Cold War, and migratory reindeer herders now cross the frontier at will. The Swedes have always had a pride in their culture and an unthreatened sense of autonomy. Swedish society has never been entirely monocultural, but its democratic system, *folkhemmet*, literally translates as 'the home of the people,' and it assumes a high degree of homogeneity.

This easy relationship with the outside world is coming to an end, and Hannerz gives two reasons for it. Firstly, Sweden now (1996) has about 2% of its population who came from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This is not a large percentage, but about 45% of these

⁹ U,Hannerz. *Transnational Connections*.. London : Routledge, 1998.

immigrants live in four suburbs of Stockholm. Once you include the tourists and business travellers, only about a third of the population in the central district has a Swedish or Finnish appearance.

The second foreign effect on the capital is from the world cities; in Stockholm's case they are mainly London, Paris and New York. Street signs in the CBD are in English and French. Places of trade and entertainment in the city centre have anglo names such *Vanessa Fashion*, *Jet Set Kläder*, *McDonalds*, *Tie Rack*, *Step In*, *Uptown Mauritz*, Neon signs proclaim *Yamaha Sound of Music* and *Coca Cola*. Paper stalls sell *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, and *Interview*. Foreign television reception, via satellite and cable, is in English.

No doubt some Stockholmers are excited by this transnational experience but others feel swamped by it. The major 'creolisation' of Stockholm society, including undermining of the language, is a result of the global influence of the 'world cities;' the major visual effect is produced by the foreign minority. Medium sized cities such as Stockholm, by movement of goods and services, go on to creolise smaller communities.

I picked an anthropologist to describe the process, but an economist or a linguist would tell the same story using different terminology. Services and language travel from the centre to the periphery, and people travel from the periphery to the centre. Cities grow bigger, and big cities usually grow faster than smaller ones. The movement is world wide, accelerating, and apparently irreversible. For everyone concerned it means dislocated lives.

Those that resent 'creolisation' cannot take their objections to the head offices of *Coca Cola* or *Microsoft*, but they can target the equally creolised immigrants.

At this point I cannot avoid some comment as to whether there is a decline in the authority of the nation-state. I do not know. A.D. Smith in 'Towards a Global Culture?' *Global Culture*, argues that nations will survive because there is no other type of organisation to carry

out the social tasks.¹⁰ Kenich Ohme, in *The Borderless World*, gives a counterview that the international corporations will perform this role.¹¹ Whatever happens, cosmopolitans will form a greater proportion of the populations of these entities in the future. I can find no new alternative to the nation-state to fire my enthusiasm. Experience in the last twenty years suggests that the usual alternative to a viable nation is banditry.

It is important to differentiate between threatened societies and threatened nations.

Cultural life may well be in a state of flux, but nations have never before had such an armoury of technology to exert control and gather data on citizens. Before the use of information technology, and the Tax File Number, the Australian government did not know how many illegal immigrants were within its borders.

3.2 Anomie

Durkheimian sociology uses the term *Anomie* to describe the loss of norms of behaviour that guide social and economic interaction. Individual happiness seems to require these guidelines. Australians tend to vote for governments that promise to defend norms, or even better, they first create a fear that social norms are under attack and then promise to defend them. The protection of the young is a favourite, because it cannot be argued against.

The First World War allied propaganda about invading German soldiers impaling babies on bayonets has its contemporary counterparts. The 2001 Election was won by defending the nation against people who were supposed to have thrown their own children into the sea.

The idea that foreigners, and other minorities, habitually perpetrate unnatural acts against children, is a very old one; it has been a mainstay of anti-semitism for centuries and crops up in 'The Prioress's Tale' in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. I have heard claims of child abuse,

¹⁰ A. Smith. 'Towards a Global Culture?' *Global Culture*. editor: M . Featherstone. London: Sage Press, 1990.

against Caribbean people in London and Aboriginals in Sydney, as though such crimes were customary among these cultures. The removing of Aboriginal children from their families and sending them to orphanages, to protect them, was an act of mind-numbing stupidity that can only be explained in terms of this ancient prejudice. The innuendos of 'the lecturer' in *Special Risks* have a similar pedigree and are likewise contemptible.

Such responses by host-cultures against minorities are of such ancient lineage, and so ongoing, they can only be looked upon as permanent. Whenever a society's norms are threatened, from whatever source, minorities are the scapegoats. Sweet smiles and appeals to reason are a waste of effort. Assimilative behaviour, as practised by Joe in England, does not work in contemporary Australia, and is probably of little current use in Britain either. A few survival tactics will have to be found if the immigrant to this country does not want to be squeezed forever into society's margins. Because of globalisation from the world cities, social norms are going to be threatened into the foreseeable future.

3.3 Australia and Post-War Immigration

Australia is an interesting example of population movement because so much of it has been documented. The post-war Immigration Program was tightly controlled and statistics were continually gathered on the number and country of origin of the newcomers. The practice of holding a national Census every five years provided information on locations of settlement and choice of occupations of immigrants.

There was even an attempt to keep track of our movements within the country. When I arrived in Australia it was a legal requirement that immigrants, of less than two years in the country, should notify the Police if they changed their address. Enforcement was another matter; I never obeyed this injunction and have not met an immigrant who did. The Police

¹¹ K. Ohme. *The Borderless World*. New York: Harper, 1990.

had better things to do than chase half a million otherwise law-abiding migrants across an eight million square mile landmass.

According to *The Paper by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration*. Published by the Australian Government publishing Service in Canberra, 1994.¹² The Australian Immigration program of the forties and fifties was based on the assumption that when people moved into their new country these immigrants would stay there. It was known that there would be a failure rate of people going home, but it was believed that it would be within the twenty percent experienced by other intake countries such as Canada.

For the first twenty years of the program this assumption held true, but the pattern changed over time. In 1977 a Government Green Paper was published, entitled *Immigration Policies and Australia's Population*.¹³ Statistics, that included Australians leaving the country as well as migrants returning, showed a new mobility. If the intake was 50,000 the net gain was zero; if it was 120,000 the net gain was 50,000; if the intake was 200,000 the net gain was 100,000.

There was an increasing group of immigrants who were not going home but merely moving on. A proportion of the migrants were becoming expatriate along with Australian-born travellers. This was part of a trend all around the world. These people were disproportionately in professional and technical occupations. They were part of a new middle-class nomadism.

This can be looked upon as a breakdown of the immigration program but I take a different view. The highly disciplined intake of people into Australia first operated in the immediate post Second World War period. War is a situation where people accept restrictions on movement, the closing of frontiers, rationing of food and fuel, the need for permits to do

¹² The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. *Paper by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1994.

¹³ The Immigration Department. *Green Paper on Immigration Policies and Australia's Population*. Canberra: Australian Government Printing Office, 1977.

things, and the right of governments to allocate citizens for special duties. Loss of individual freedom in the national interest is a price that citizens have to pay in war, but governments tend to hang on to these powers after the conflict is over. The present chaotic situation is normality.

But it is normality magnified by the growth and collapse of old Empires, and facilitated by enormous improvements in the technology of travel. Larry took five weeks to voyage from Britain to Australia in 1961. By the late 1960s, immigrants were being flown the same distance in less than two days. To comprehend the influence of Imperialism on world travel it is necessary not only to understand the effect produced by competing colonisers but also the response of subject peoples to this dislocation.

4 Old Empires

4.1 Malta

People who live in larger countries seem to imagine that tiny nations are enclosed and remote from reality. This view has been fostered in fiction with tales of Shangri-La and Ruritania. Fairy stories such as Cinderella are often placed in tiny kingdoms. The tourist in Europe may visit microstates such as Andorra or Liechtenstein and find them amusing, absurd, and detached from the realities of world politics.

Malta has its share of rococo palaces and craggy castles, but the fairy tale ends with the architecture. Malta is like a community of people camped on the median strip of a busy road. It seems precarious but they have been there a long time.

Malta has experienced serial-colonisation. Many countries have been colonised but Malta is unusual in been repeatedly occupied by different foreign powers for millennia.

No one is sure who the first inhabitants of Malta were. Five thousand years ago there were people on the island who worked with copper. They built megalithic temples and made little statues of pregnant women. Not much else is known about them. The way of life lasted at least fifteen hundred years and then Malta became apparently depopulated for three centuries. 'Apparently' is a necessary qualifier because, in archaeology, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Three thousand years ago a new culture ruled the island, these people made iron weapons and had a patriarchal religion. They used the temples of the earlier society as crematoriums.

Then the Phoenicians came. The Maltese claim to be of Phoenician ancestry. These sea traders called Malta 'Malath' which means 'harbour.' Later Greek colonisers had difficulty with the 't-h' sound and called it 'Melita.' I do not know which was the first civilisation to realise that Malta was strategic, but every power that wished to dominate the Mediterranean had to take Malta first.

Malta's possession of the best harbour in the central Mediterranean has been a blessing and curse, and over the centuries it has brought wealth and bloodshed to the island. The Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs, Franks, Spaniards, French, and English, have strutted into Malta and declared themselves as rulers. The island has been part of the personal property of kings, and passed on to others as though it was a trinket. It has been signed away in international treaties by people who probably did not know where Malta was.

Malta became a footnote in the histories of other nations. If you want to know anything about Maltese culture in 600 BC your best source is Greek histories of that period. To know about nineteenth century Malta read British history. This lack of an historical voice is characteristic of colonised people. In writing on the Maltese I will sometimes rely on family stories; it is less than satisfactory but it is all that is available. I believe that every child of empire carries a *Book of Beginnings* in their head, and each volume is as unreliable as Larry's. Whenever I depart from documented history I will make it clear that I am doing so.

I am not suggesting the Maltese were downtrodden. If you are colonised once, or twice, or three times: you are downtrodden. If you are colonised six or seven times you become proud that you have outlived all those empires. The Maltese developed a kind of revolving-door attitude to imperialism. To sustain this perspective requires an almost Chinese view of time. In one of the dialogues between old Paul and the naive young Larry, Paul comments:

'Empires don't last; the British will go soon.'
'Dad says the British Empire brings civilisation.'
Paul laughed. (90)

Malta became British by rebelling against their French rulers and then calling for help from Britain. The Maltese thought they were being liberated but, when the Royal Navy saw what a lovely harbour Malta possessed, we became a colony again. Malta is now an independent nation. The British armed the Maltese to defend the islands during World War Two, and the islanders fought with valour. After the war independence was granted. It was

done gradually and with little rancour. Self government came in 1947 and independence followed. Larry's experience of Malta was during the decline of colonial rule in the late 1940s. The British Empire was then a reality, and now it is part of Maltese history.

The story of how the Maltese came to Australia is typically long and complicated. The succession of colonial rulers saw themselves as maritime powers, and it was logical that they were quick to use Maltese as sailors.

That was the beginning; there are now people of Maltese ancestry in almost every country that has a coastline. The building of the Suez Canal expedited this. A colonised people became opportunistic colonisers. Joe was typical of his generation. He used British merchant shipping to tour the world and eventually find a new home. The episode in which Joe jumped ship in Australia is also typical. If family stories are to be believed, illegal entry by Maltese sailors into Australia and America developed into something of an art form during the twentieth century. Some of these adventurers stayed and others returned. Because the stay was illegal, and names were frequently changed, there is a paucity of official records on Maltese immigration before 1945. B. York, in *The Maltese in Australia*, claims Maltese were among the crew and convicts of the First Fleet but it is difficult to verify this from the shipping list because of latinisation of foreign names. It is not until the nineteenth century that there is documentary evidence of Maltese settlement in Australia. A group of Maltese men were brought to Queensland in the 1890s – as indentured labour to work in the cane fields. Some returned some stayed.

Until the nineteen-forties Maltese immigrants were predominantly male; it has distorted the social history of the Maltese in this country. Maltese women, traditionally the cultural backbone, were rare in Australia until the nineteen fifties. This may explain why there are few recognisably Maltese communities in Australia. We are a rather small minority in this country, although there must be many Australians with some Maltese ancestry.

Although all colonies are unique, the action by all colonised people, in response to their circumstances, follows a similar pattern. They internationalise. They counter-invade. They find economic niches within the sphere of the ruler. They learn the technology of the ruler and it becomes theirs.

The Indian doctor in Larry's childhood suburb, the career of Joe on steamships, and Larry working with computers in the Americanised Pacific, are all facets of this sociological hitch hiking.

Such behaviour was usually not part of the plans of the Imperial ruler. In nineteenth century European cities there was a fear of the Lascar. A Lascar was strictly speaking an Indian mariner from the west coast of the sub-continent, but it came to mean any sailor with a dark skin. They were sailors who jumped ship or were merely on shore leave – many British merchant ships had Asian crews and British officers.

They got into the sort of trouble that all sailors get into when ashore in a foreign port, but their behaviour was seen as a racial characteristic. Edgar Allan Poe's murderous orang-utan in *Murders in the Rue Morgue* may well be a popular characterisation of the dark and primitive stranger in a civilised city.

The Maltese were part of an invisible army of foreign men moving around the world a hundred and fifty years ago. They built railroads in America, looked for gold in Australia, and hunted whales on the high seas. There is so much travel that cannot be known because the people concerned were considered to be nobodies even by themselves.

This is not to say that that the lives of these men were totally unexamined or undocumented. Joseph Conrad was eminently qualified to write on the lives of seafarers and exiles. For twenty years, as apprentice and ship's master, he voyaged the oceans of the world and the rivers of Africa. Conrad later wrote numerous novels and short stories based on these experiences.

In *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,' Typhoon*, and *The Shadow Line*, Conrad showed ships as isolated worlds in which men of different kinds and nationalities were tested together by the hardships of seafaring and displayed their common humanity. This was not entirely metaphorical, when a ship was out of sight of land it was its own cosmos for weeks in the era before radio telegraphy. I can think of no contemporary equivalent, even an orbiting space station is in constant communication with ground control. Rex Clements, in *A Gypsy of the Horn*, gives an account of his life as a ship's apprentice aboard the *Arethusa* during the early twentieth century. Clements lists ten nationalities among the crew of thirty men and boys, and all shades of skin colour.¹⁴

The Maltese achieved a brief notoriety or fame in Australia in 1916, 214 of them arrived in Fremantle and were not allowed to land. They were immigrants planning to join the existing Maltese community in Melbourne.

The following events have become part of Maltese-Australian folklore, but for the details I am relying on B. York's *Empire and Race: The Maltese in Australia 1881-1949*.¹⁵ When the ship arrived in Port Melbourne the Maltese were not allowed to disembark on the grounds that they were black. Later the Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, denied this and said the action was taken in conformity with the *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901*. The role of the Act was to keep out people who were black.

The Maltese could all speak English, so they were given a language test in Dutch and failed it. These recalcitrant non-Dutch speaking Maltese were then shipped off to Noumia for internment.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* took up the case of the Maltese in Noumia. The editor argued that they were not black. Billy Hughes said they were. There was growing public

¹⁴ Rex Clements. *A Gypsy of the Horn*. Melbourne: Longmans, Green & Co. 1938. 8-12

¹⁵ B. York. *Empire & Race: The Maltese in Australia*. Sydney: University of NSW Press, 1990.

sympathy for the Noumia internees; it was known that Maltese villagers had given hospitality to Anzacs recuperating after the Gallipoli landing. One of the first Anzac Day services was held in Malta in 1916.

After three months the Maltese were brought back from Noumia and incarcerated in a ship's hulk in Sydney Harbour. They remained imprisoned on the ship for six months and were then released. The Maltese disappeared from the interest of politicians and newspaper editors, and presumably became Australians.

The current interpretation of this peculiar episode is that Billy Hughes didn't care what race the Maltese were. The debate over their blackness was just a red herring. The Prime Minister was trying to get a 'yes' vote on the Conscription Referendum. Union Leaders asserted that Hughes would import foreign labour if there was conscription, and there would be no jobs for the soldiers when they came home. Hughes denied this, but the Maltese arrived at an embarrassing moment during the Referendum campaign. He got them swiftly out of the country until after the poll.

4.2 Britain V France

NOTE: When I refer to India and Indians I mean the people or descendants of Imperial India: who could now be Indian, Pakistani, or Bangla Deshi. I have no wish to offend national loyalties and I do realise that people from different parts of the sub-continent played different roles in the Raj, but I intend to give just a general view of the effect the British Empire had on the sub-continent and vice-versa.

It is easy to see why the British Empire has such a lingering foot-print fifty years after it ceased to exist. It left behind an inheritance of transplanted populations: Tamils in Sri Lanka, Indians in Fiji, Europeans in Australasia, Afro and Indian Caribbeans, Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore, Indians in South Africa, and Larry in London and Adelaide. These are the

children and grandchildren of Empire. It is as though empire building has an automatic effect of creating diasporas.

Larry's preoccupation with Jews and Gypsies is not mere post-war guilt. Until recent times the Jews were repeatedly only one step ahead of one empire-builder or other; the deportation by the Assyrians in 721BC, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman Emperor Titus, are so well documented that they have defined the term 'Diaspora.' According to Katherine Esty, *The Gypsies, Wanderers in Time*,¹⁶ the Rom began their westward migrations in the eleventh century as a result of the invasion by Muslim warlords into the Indian Subcontinent. Esty admits there is a fog surrounding the origin of the Gypsies that has only been partly dispersed by studies of their language and blood groups.

Historically, Empires tend to have a definite shape that betrays the imperatives and opportunities that drove their formation. The British Empire at its maximum size, circa 1940, had a scattered, almost random, appearance on the atlas. This is deceptive, frequently adjacent to a British Colony was a French one; this was especially true in the Caribbean, West Africa and South East Asia. Canada was British but had been French. An earlier atlas of circa 1740 would show the Indian Subcontinent as a patchwork of French and British possessions. The apparently random scattering of territories was created in a game of move and countermove between the two powers that dislocated hundreds of millions of lives.

Britain and France have a history of expending enormous resources trying to undermine each other. J.E. Neale, in *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments 1559-1581*, relates that Queen Elizabeth's support for the Huguenot cause cost £750,000 over five years, at a time when England's annual tax revenues amounted to £200,000.¹⁷ Elizabeth's challenger to the English throne, Mary Stuart, was the wife of the Dauphin of France and carried the emblem of

¹⁶ K. Esty. *The Gypsies, Wanderers in Time*. New York: Hawthorne Books. 1969. 15-26

¹⁷ J. Neale. *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments*. London: Jonathon Cape, 1952. 86-90.

France as well as those of Scotland and England on her banner. The uncovering of the Ridolfi Plot in 1571 revealed a plan to use French troops and money to make Mary Queen of England – it is debatable as to whether Mary was a conspirator.¹⁸ Mary was executed in 1587 after more than a decade of imprisonment.

Sequence does not necessarily indicate causation, but both powers did become less inclined to interfere in each other's internal affairs after these misadventures. What followed for the next two hundred years bears some similarity to the forty years of Cold War between the United States of America and the USSR. France and Britain competed for foreign spheres of influence, embargoed each other's trade, jostled each other for empire, and fought proxy wars in remote lands.

A prerequisite to this behaviour was the technology required to exert power at a distance. According to G.N. Clarke, *The Seventeenth Century*, the idea of a national Navy was a product of that century.¹⁹ Jonathan Swift's sea battle between the nations of Lilliput and Blefuscu in *Gulliver's Travels* was fought again and again between British and French ships around the globe.

The Caribbean Empire grew out of slavery and sugar plantations, and was colonialism at its vilest and most profitable. The colonisers imported African Slaves and, later, indentured labour from the Indian sub-continent.

According to Eric Williams, *The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*, Anglo-French rivalry for the islands of the Caribbean was at its height from 1700 to 1815.²⁰ Miniscule colonies, that appear as dust specks on a world map, changed hands several times during the century. There was a race to build lighthouses on uninhabitable rocks to establish

¹⁸ J. Neale. 226-242.

¹⁹ G. Clark. *The Seventeenth Century*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960. 115.

²⁰ E. Williams. *Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1970.

sovereignty. In the Peace Treaty of 1763, Britain had a choice of returning Canada or the tiny island of Guadeloupe to the French. Britain retained Canada and was considered by some to be the loser on the deal.

Britain's interest in Africa was initially in the west coast, to obtain slaves for the plantations of the Caribbean and North America. According to S.F. Nadel, 'The Kede: A Riverain State in Northern Nigeria' in *African Political Systems*, slaves were traditionally tradable trophies of war between the competing nations of West and Central Africa.²¹ I am not going to enter into a debate on African culpability in the American Slave Trade; it does not exonerate Europe or America.

Involvement in other parts of Africa grew out of rivalry with the French. Details of these machinations come from Oliver, & Atmore's, *Africa Since 1800*.²² To forestall any plan by Napoleon to take India, Britain seized the Cape of Good Hope from the Dutch. In return, Britain took Java from the French and gave it to Holland. Napoleon's army captured Egypt in 1798 and, when the British defeated the French three years later, the country came under the British sphere. Until 1801 the British had not suzerainty of any part of Africa beyond a dozen miles inland. With Egypt came the Nile and the promise of access to Africa's interior. In 1814 Britain seized Mauritius, also en-route to India, from the French.

With the decline in the, legal, slave trade European governments re-assessed their interest in West Africa. Holland abandoned its forts as unprofitable. There was another reason for reluctance to enter the hinterland of the continent; the wealth of the slave trade had created new African fiefdoms armed with guns. The British Parliament recommended a similar retreat to the Dutch, but it was ambiguously worded with an eye on French behaviour. France began to incorporate West Africa with its Sahara Colonies.

²¹ F. Nadel. 'The Kede: A Riverain State in Northern Nigeria.' *African Political Systems*. editors: M. Fortes & E. Evens- Pritchard. London: Oxford University Press, 1970. 125-130

So begin further jockeying between the two powers. The boundaries of colonies were decided on the basis of military strategy. No consideration was given to the national or language groupings of the African inhabitants, or whether these segments had a future as economically viable nations.

France had an east-west policy that aimed for control of tropical Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Britain had a north-south policy that aspired to hegemony over lands between the tip of South Africa and Egypt. Some sort of confrontation was inevitable although it didn't happen until 1898.

The Fashoda Incident is one of the most published episodes of nineteenth century Africa. Young Winston Churchill, who was with the Kitchener party, wrote a book on Fashoda, *The War of the Rivers*. If it was a war, it was a very well mannered one. I have used R. Brooke-Smith's *The Scramble for Africa*.²³ The bare facts are as follows. A French military patrol, led by a Captain Marchand, journeyed east out of the jungle of Central Africa and hoisted the Tricolour in the Sudan outpost of Fashoda. A British expedition, led by Sir Herbert Kitchener, travelled south from Egypt and arrived in Fashoda. The two officers shook hands and Kitchener planted the Union Jack nearby. Both parties stayed posted in polite antagonism for three months while details of the international incident were passed to the diplomats and bureaucrats of London and Paris.

Britain and France were not allies at the time but neither country wanted war, especially not over Sudan. What followed was a tit-for-tat agreement whereby if France took a part of Africa, Britain could do the same elsewhere on the continent and vice-versa. The result was that by 1900 most of Africa had been cut up like a cake between the two powers.

²² R. Oliver & A. Atmore, *Africa since 1800* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

²³ R. Brooke-Smith, *The Scramble for Africa* . London : Macmillan, 1987.

For the dates and events pertaining to the conquest of India I have used *A History of India* by M. Edwardes.²⁴ The Indian Empire started in the seventeenth century as a chain of trading posts vying with France, Holland, and Portugal for monopolies on spices, tea, and indigo. Of these indigo was the most important.

According to Edwardes, the early phase of the Indian Empire was a strictly business operation, but the various East India Companies had their own private armies and navies to deal with the competition. Britain was fortunate in that their traders first established themselves when the Mogul Empire was at its peak and were able to benefit as the dynasty decayed. The British East India Company became a tax collector for the minor kingdoms that emerged, and later paid the salaries of the rulers. India proved to be an eminently taxable country during the two hundred years of British influence.

There were several British wars against the French during the period 1740-63, but they effectively merged into one conflict with short interludes of re-arming. During hostilities the East India Company was able to call in the aid of the Royal Navy to further its own interests. An unusually vigorous company man, called Robert Clive, removed French influence from the Sub-Continent by winning the battle of Plassey, in 1757, against ridiculous odds. (Clive's force numbered 3,000 against an army of 50,000) According to Edwardes, the majority of the French army were mercenaries who stayed aside to see which force would be the likely victor.

India remained in Company hands for a century but became the property of the Crown in 1858. Britain ruled and taxed India with a minuscule force compared to the population of the subcontinent; by making itself the ruling caste in a highly stratified and divided society, as did the Moguls three hundred years previously.

From an imperial point of view India's greatest asset, apart from taxation, was its workforce. Indians and Nepalese served as soldiers throughout the Empire. Indians worked

²⁴ M. Edwardes. *A History of India*. New York: Mentor, 1961.

as administrators and clerks in Malaya and Singapore. They ran the sugar mills of Fiji and Trinidad. Indians built and ran the railways of British Africa. In the role of Lascars (referred to earlier) they crewed merchant ships. Those Indians that stayed in far-flung outposts of Empire established businesses. The symbiotic, but unequal, relationship between Britons and Indians is not the primary subject of this work, but it is hard to imagine the British Empire functioning without these international workers.

Larry encounters a kind of ghost-history of the French in Australia. He is given it all in one dose from Alfred on Bruny Island.

'This island is named after a Frenchman. The British settled Australia to keep the French out and they were still considered a threat afterwards. If Napoleon had wanted to take a slice of Australia he would have had a fair chance; the loyalty of the convicts to Britain could not be guaranteed; some had been supporters of the French and American Revolutions, and there were Irish rebels among them.' (54)

The French Revolution left a mark on all Western cultures, but in the case of Australia it has been a peculiar one. The First Fleet arrived at Sydney Cove in 1788, and the Bastille fell in 1789. Alfred's generalisations are not false but the reality was a little more complicated. For names, dates, and events, I am relying on 'French Explorers in The Pacific in The Eighteenth Century,' by Elliott Forsyth, a paper from the anthology *Studies from Terra Australis to Australia*.²⁵

Bouganville sailed for the Pacific in 1766 and it was only due to bad luck and poor judgement that he failed to claim Australia two years before Cook. Bouganville sighted many islands but made few landings. He missed the east coast of Australia, and turned back a short distance from the Queensland shore when encountering the coral reef that now bears his name.

²⁵ E. Forsyth. 'French Exploration in the Pacific in the Eighteenth Century,' *Studies from Terra Australis to Australia*. Canberra: Humanities Press, 1996.

Lapérouse* set out in 1785, under orders to explore the north and south Pacific. He is remembered as an explorer and scientist, but part of his role was that of spy. According to Forsyth, Lapérouse was under orders to make observations of the activities of European powers in the region, and, while in a Russian Pacific port, was given further orders to proceed to New South Wales. Lapérouse anchored in Botany Bay on January 26, 1788, shortly after the arrival of the Captain Phillip's fleet at Port Jackson. In February, the French sailed away into oblivion. The wrecked remains of Lapérouse's two ships were found years later on a reef of the Solomon Islands. Although Forsyth does not suggest it, I do wonder if the Royal Navy had something to do with this tragic occurrence.

D'Entrecasteaux with two ships was sent in search of the missing Lapérouse, in 1791. The French Revolution was in progress although it would be another two years before it descended to the excesses of the Terror. The expedition did not find Lapérouse or his ships. Anton de Bruni d'Entrecasteaux died on voyage in 1793. Bruny Island, on which Larry and Alfred are holding a conversation, was named after him. The expedition broke up in February 1794, over disagreements involving Revolutionary politics.

The Revolution delayed France's imperial aims for years. Buonaparte, from 1799, wanted a Pacific Empire, but his defeat in 1815, guaranteed that Australasia would be British. There was one notable French expedition during Buonaparte's rule; Nicolas Baudin explored the coast of Tasmania and the Bass Strait islands. In 1802, he had a courteous meeting with Matthew Flinders at Encounter Bay, South Australia. Baudin died on voyage. So many French commanders and mariners did not make it home.

There has been silence, on the part of the French, related to Baudin's expedition. According to Forsyth in 1989, Baudin's journal has never been published in French.

* The name is variously written as la Perouse and Lapérouse. I have used the format employed in Forsyth's paper.

Ironically, Baudin is a respected explorer in Australia; this is partly because of the talents of the ship's artists, Lesueur and Petit. Their fine drawings of Australian flora and fauna, and sensitive portrayals of Aborigines, were exhibited in the South Australian Art Gallery during 2002-3.

French interest in Australia was real; Imperial Britain's prize was India, and France wanted an equivalent trophy. The British hold on Australia was minuscule, but, because of the Revolution and the Napoleonic War, French desires remained a phantom.

Fear of impending French invasion motivated establishment of colonies at Swan River and Port Philip. No doubt Baudin's expedition helped to keep the rumours alive. The rapid colonisation of Australia, 1788-1820, owes a great deal to Francophobia.

The decline in British and French empire building coincided with the unification of Germany in 1871 and its rise as a European power. The peaceful resolution of the Fashoda incident led to the Entente Cordiale in 1904.

To connect and secure these empires it was necessary to establish a chain of ports and garrisons around the world. Tiny members of empire such as Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, St Helena, and Singapore played this role. Britain's power rested mainly on the prestige of the Royal Navy. The Navy had proved itself unbeatable in the eighteenth century, but had been largely untested against a major nation during the hundred and nine years between the Battle of Trafalgar, 1805, and the First World War. The Battle of Jutland, 1916, ended inconclusively. Britain's phase of Empire building was based on confidence in the largely untried might of its maritime force.

A major purpose of the Empire was to feed and clothe Britain, and it did so magnificently during peacetime. A British family, in the early twentieth century, could have at their meal table: lamb chops from New Zealand, butter from Australia, bread made from Canadian wheat, sugar from Jamaica, pepper from India, tea from Ceylon, oranges from South Africa,

etc. The group of diners would in probability have been wearing cotton from India and wool from Australia. Maintaining such supplies from across the globe proved more difficult in wartime.

Regardless of independence movements, the Empire was a very fragile thing in war. The great Naval battleships proved vulnerable to air attack. As the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Curtin, learnt in 1942, Britain was unable to defend the Empire. Like the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it looked good on the map. After the fall of Singapore it was all over bar the paperwork.

The British have a tendency to pat themselves on the back over the relatively casualty-free way they unburdened themselves of Empire. It is true that Britain avoided the French experiences in Indo-China and Algeria; but after independence millions died, largely on the Indian sub-continent, because of lack of political preparedness by the newly independent nations. It was probably better to give independence too early rather than too late, but a virtue shouldn't be made out of expedience.

4.3 Postcolonialism

What remained was English as a world language, a pattern of international trade, and an enormous shift in human populations.

The largest group of travellers were the Indians who had formed the administrative tier in so many colonies. The Indians were unwanted in many African countries because they were reminders of colonisation; some returned to India or travelled on to Britain. Algerian supporters of France in the colonial war were betrayed by de Gaulle and found themselves at risk of retribution in their own country; many fled to France where they were not wanted. All were the children of Empire, unsure of their identity.

The residents of Britain's ex-colonies were told they were 'British.' Boys and girls of four continents had been given a thorough schooling in the history and culture of the British Isles.

To quote Stuart Hall in *Culture, Globalisation, and the World System*:

When I got to England in 1951, I looked out and there were Wordsworth's daffodils. Of course, what else would you expect to find? That's what I knew about. That is what trees and flowers meant. I didn't know the names of the flowers I'd left behind in Jamaica.²⁶

The idea that everything good and true came from Britain was one that had to be overcome by all ex-colonies. The role of the artist in developing national identity was paramount.

Australian painters struggled to accurately depict the Australian landscape over a period of a hundred and fifty years. Australians, being colonisers as well as colonised, wisely followed the Peru approach of naming everything they saw even if they didn't know what it was.

Western-educated Indians, such as Mulk Raj Anand, used the European format of the novel to explain India to themselves as well as the world. The cultural cringe was a problem for the children of Empire everywhere.

Hall's recognition of Wordsworth's daffodils is not unique and it has been extended into the international corporate world. I have been a resident in Australia for more than forty years and yet I know the street plan of Manhattan (I have never been there) better than that of Brisbane or Perth. The nineteen eighties *Coca Cola* advertisement, *The Real Thing*, depicted black, white, young and old, holding hands and singing in harmony. The viewer was meant to infer that drinking the beverage was a stimulant to internationalism, racial tolerance and joy. It was, of course, merely Americanisation. It was a precursor to a methodology, which is still with us, selling everything from shampoos to cars.

Ania Loomba states in *Colonialism / Postcolonialism* that by the 1930s colonies and ex-colonies covered 84.6% of the world's land surface. This is not a very helpful statistic, but its

²⁶ S. Hall. *Culture Globalisation and World System*. editor A. King. London: Macmillan, 1991. 24

size demonstrates the difficulty of forming any general theory on the experience of being colonised or descended from a colonised people.

Each scholar of colonialism, depending on her disciplinary affiliation, geographic and institutional location and identity, is likely to come up with a different set of examples, emphasis and perspective on the question.²⁷ (Loomba, xiii)

Leaving aside Ania Loomba's 'scholar of colonialism,' individual perspective does vary with the time and degree of separation from the colonial experience. An African-American systems analyst in New York may not dwell on plantation slavery except when being the target of a racist comment in a supermarket. An Australian Aboriginal may think that the postcolonial experience has not become post yet.

A subset of Imperialism is the double burden of patriarchy and colonialism borne by women under colonial rule. This has created a discourse on Postcolonialism involving differing schools of Feminism. It is a subject in itself and I am not qualified to enter into the debate, but if decolonisation merely transfers power from the male rulers to the male colonised it has obviously achieved little for the female half of the population. For a Caribbean woman's voice on the colonial and postcolonial experience, I recommend Merle Hodge's novel *Crick Crack Monkey*.

It has been said to me that the transportation of convicts to Australia, and other penal settlements, was slavery, and Larry expresses this point of view in *The Book of Beginnings*. If it were so it was bondage for a fixed term. A black slave's children were also slaves and their grandchildren, if free, were seen as descendants of slaves through white eyes. Australians of convict and free-settler ancestry pass each other in the street without knowing.

If Postcolonialism is sometimes unhelpful in providing an umbrella to cover all situations, it has something cogent to say on the face-to-face interaction between the children of empire and the descendants of the coloniser. Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* is given

entirely to analysing these encounters based on personal experiences as a Black-French Doctor of Medicine in post-war France. The book was first published in 1952 and because of this some of the behaviour seems dated, but there are echoes in contemporary society. There are many embarrassed meetings.

When white speaks to black in pidgin, black feels obliged to reply in the same way because he or she doesn't want to appear a poseur.

The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his person will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth.²⁸

The controlling effect of the desire to gain approval of the white-other is a connecting thread through the book. I believe that the descendants of the colonised, are now less inclined to seek approval of 'The Other.'

Black Skin, White Masks ends with a kind of manifesto in the form of a series of aphorisms. Fanon is groping towards a way that includes the historicism of Larry and the living in the present of Peru. The language used shows the influence of Existentialism that was the dominant philosophy in French intellectual and artistic circles at the time that Fanon was writing. A tenet of Sartrean Existentialism is that people in western society are free, but the burden of their condition is living with this freedom.

My life is caught in the lasso of existence. My freedom turns me back on myself.
I recognise that I have one right alone: That of demanding human behaviour of the other.
The disaster of the man of colour lies in the fact that he was enslaved.
Superiority? Inferiority? Why not the simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?²⁹

The link between recent empires and race would be of little consequence to Larry if he had not come to Australia. The Maltese did not have a culturally shocked encounter when

²⁷ A. Loomba. *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge, 1998. xiii

²⁸ F, Fanon. *Black Skin, White Mask*. London : Grove Press, 1962. 63

²⁹ Fanon, 231-232

officers of the Royal Navy walked ashore to claim the islands for Britain in 1800. Malta's colonial history is a story of neglect, like Ireland, but not of slavery.

When Larry immigrates he innocently steps into a country where skin pigmentation is of paramount historical importance. One of the first laws enacted upon Federation was the *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901*. The purpose of the Act was not merely to deter folk from China or Japan, but it was also intended to exclude the people of the British Empire who were considered non-white. I have no intention of giving a litany of legal restrictions placed on the Maltese in the first fifty years of the twentieth century. I recommend *Empire and Race: The Maltese in Australia 1881-1949*, by Barry York, for anyone requiring this information.

Larry does not have any restriction on his civil rights in Australia. Larry votes for the first time in a Federal Election in Tasmania. He makes a hash of the paper but his right to vote is unquestioned. Larry goes on to study science in a N.S.W college and, later in the novel, goes to university. It is in the face-to-face interactions that prejudice manifests itself. Like Fanon he has one right that has to be fought for: 'That of demanding human behaviour of the other.'

That is the common thread in postcolonialism: The fraught confrontation between the children of empire and the descendants of the colonisers. The colonisers created us and they have to live with us. It became a common saying when Caribbean people started arriving in numbers in Britain following WWII: 'The chickens have come home to roost.'

Based on my childhood memories of people and poultry, I believe that chickens would have handled race relations in a much more sensible way than the white Londoners of the time. When chickens compete with newcomers for food, status, and sex, their behaviour is overt and devoid of hypocrisy.

For most postcolonised people the empires ended more than forty years ago. Even if you include the USSR as the last European empire, it all collapsed a generation ago. The beast has changed its species. We now have Imperialism in the Marxist sense which requires no flag.

The U.S.A., which has had an anti-colonial policy throughout its history, is now the world's dominant imperial power.

A weakness of Postcolonialism is that it is like trying to drive forward while looking through the rear-view mirror. The collapse of the European empires may have begun a diaspora but the movement of peoples around the world continues apace. Each contemporary traveller in an unfamiliar city generates more fraught encounters.

Within the context of *Special Risks*, Postcolonialism seems to be a dead issue and Peru's advice to: 'Throw away the *Book of Beginnings*,' holds true. But since the bombing of the Twin Towers in New York, 2001, and the subsequent, 'War on Terrorism,' there may be life in the old theory yet. The confrontation in the streets and shopping malls is no longer just between black and white, but is also between Westerner and Arab, Christian and Muslim. This would have been unthinkable in 1998 when the novel ends. Out of this new situation may come the death of old empires and the birth of new ones. The events of the 21st Century are beyond the scope of the novel and hence the exegesis, but don't throw away the Postcolonial library.

4.4 Citizenship and Empire

I think that Larry is being unfair in his description of the citizenship ceremony, in *Special Risks*, but I left it as it was. Australians are a people who enjoy informality and they are not at their best when performing rituals. Such ceremonies are rites of passage but the citizenship ceremony does demand the question: a passage to what?

The citizenship ceremony is extremely important because until Australians focused their minds on citizenship for immigrants in 1948, the Australian born weren't citizens either. Australian Citizenship was not defined in the Constitution although Australians knew who they were. Identity was based on ideas of blood and soil.

The idea of citizenship grew out of tribal kinship. National affiliation was decided by family, *jus sanguinis* (the law of the blood). According to this approach, race was more important than place of birth. It still is a definition of nationality in many countries of continental Europe. The idea reasserts itself whenever a host population is confronted by a large number of new arrivals.

The finer points of the British Constitution have been established more by legal judgement rather than statute. In 1608, after the Calvin Case,³⁰ nationality was defined by *jus soli* (the law of the soil). Anyone born on British soil was British regardless of ancestry. People born elsewhere, but resident in Britain, could become British by a process of naturalisation. A lot of seventeenth century Jews and Huguenots were no doubt very grateful for the ruling. This down-to-earth approach to nationality followed the Union Jack around the world.

The *Constitution of the United States of America* in 1787, and the French *Declaration of Human Rights of Man and Citizen* in 1789, expressed citizenship in terms of the right and obligation to participate in the republic. The American document has a lot of appeal because of its clarity and brevity. It is still possible to read *The Constitution*, and the relevant amendments, in an hour, and know what an American citizen is and what is expected of them by Federal law. To gain a similar degree of knowledge of the British Constitution you would have to go through eight hundred years of Acts of Parliament and Law Court decisions.

The delegates to the Australasian Federal Convention of 1897-98, who met to frame the Australian Constitution, would have known these preceding facts, but they were not much help in the attempt to define an Australian.

The problem was that everything had to be couched in terms of the British Empire. British law did not have 'citizens' but only spoke of 'subjects.' The resulting *Constitution of the Commonwealth* does not use 'citizen' or 'Australian' at all when referring to the people of

this country. Citizens are mentioned in Part IV of Chapter I when describing people who have allegiance to a foreign power, and it makes them seem sinister. The office of Governor General figures prominently in all things governmental but there is no mention of a Prime Minister, although this office may be assumed in the description of the Parliamentary system of Government in Chapters I to III.

According to David Dutton, *One of Us: a Century of Australian Citizenship*, there were many red herrings at the debates and one of them was disagreement as to whether a person naturalised in the old colonies of New South Wales or South Australia could be considered naturalised in a Commonwealth sense. Naturalisation remained a State matter until the *Naturalisation Act 1903*.³¹ The problem of whether a British Subject, naturalised in Australia, would be considered British in Canada was passed on to the House of Lords. The Westminster law lords debated the matter for the next decade.

Most of the delegates to the Federal Convention were a long way from home. They had businesses, bureaucracies, and families, neglected while the conference went on and on. It created a situation where unresolved items were passed over. Issues such as safeguard of rights became the truncated section 117 Chapter V of the Constitution.

A subject of the Queen, resident in any State, shall not be subject in any other State to any disability or discrimination which would not be equally applicable to him if he were a subject of the Queen resident in such other State.

It is an excellent introduction to what could be a declaration of rights, but the authors of the Constitution did not proceed further on the issue of 'disability or discrimination.'

The final result is a document that is very thorough in its delineation of the powers between the Commonwealth and the States, right down to lighthouses and buoys, but left the

³⁰ G.. Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the 17th Century*. New York: Harper and Row, 1959. 51-87

³¹ David Dutton. *One of Us?* Sydney:UNSW Press. 2002. 13-14

relationship between the individual and government to the port wine and stilton cheese vagaries of British case law.

It must be remembered that the delegates were in harmony with most Australians in their conservatism. Until 1880 more than half of the population were born overseas, and 'overseas' largely meant the British Isles.

David Dutton gives the view: 'Australian citizenship has no coherent substance, because the Commonwealth has never put it there and the Australian populace has not demanded it.'³² I know what he means, but it seems to me that the lack has been more than adequately filled by folklore. Ask a dozen Australians as to what it is to be an Australian and you will get a hotchpotch of answers based on *jus sanguinis*, *jus soli*, eighteenth century idealism, and a love of cricket. National governments have tried to rectify this with law, but political parties legislate their biases. A greater problem is that legislature, unlike constitutional law, is easily reversed. Our rights and freedoms are fragile.

Female suffrage meant that politicians could no longer ignore the fact that Australian women lost their nationality on marriage. Both Britain and Australia were in contravention of the Hague Convention, 1930, in this regard. It was not rectified until after the Second World War. In the narrow legal sense, Australian women did not become Australians in their own right until 1949.

In terms of law Australian Citizenship was born on Australia Day, 1949. The Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 took three years to frame and owes a great deal to the enthusiasm and dedication of the Labor Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell. The legislation was in conformity with the Conventions of the newly formed United Nations Organisation.

Calwell's purpose was not just to facilitate the integration of immigrants but also to foster a feeling of national identity among the native born. The Act of 1948 has been renamed twice

and racially liberalised since, but the framework of Calwell's legislation remains. No one seemed to think it odd that citizenship was being defined fifty years after the framing of the Constitution. To the despair of French Customs Officers, carriers of Australian Passports continued to have 'British Subject' and 'Australian Citizen' on the same travel document until 1976.

My attitude towards Arthur Calwell has always been mixed. On the plus side, Calwell did what the fathers of the Constitution didn't have the nerve or inclination to do by changing Australians from subjects to citizens. As a minus, he had a really hard-nosed attitude to immigrants; we were just economic units or, at best, breeding stock. To Calwell the immigration program was an exercise in nation building.

The 'Citizen' word was entered into Australian law, but it still requires a widely accepted meaning. In popular culture, many Australian-born think that citizenship is something that immigrants do. I have suggested to a few of my fellow Australians that it could be a good idea if we all underwent some sort of citizenship ceremony, but I usually get a shocked response. There has been a failure by governments of the last fifty years in selling the idea of citizenship to the wider population.

It is not really a problem for the native-born, *jus soli* applies and whatever an Australian does is by definition Australian. For a migrant it is like being a cross-country runner travelling across a landscape in which there are no signposts. Various governments have brought in policies that are supposed to provide guidance, but merely betray their own racial biases. There have been three main approaches in the century since Federation. The longest-lived was 'assimilation,' 1920-1970, and then we had 'multiculturalism' for twenty-five years. The current flavour is called 'mainstreaming' which tries to combine the previous two with a

³² Dutton. 19.

touch of Hansonism. I have lived through all three policies and haven't noticed much difference.

Immigrants are catalysts of change by merely being present. We arouse strong emotions among the Australian born. We are looked on as hard to please; it is a little unfair, the sort of people who stray from their place of birth are by nature discontented. We are a threat to the status-quo by occupying space. We are like the butterfly effect in Chaos Theory; the insect flutters its wings in Peking and influences a storm in New York. A lot of resentment seems to be caused by a difficulty in separating nationality and culture, and society's confusion has manifested itself in the work of Australian writers.

4.5 The Immigrant in Literature

As far as I know, the first piece of fiction sited in Australia, was *Gulliver's Travels*. Gulliver gives the position of Lilliput as being '30 Degrees 2 Minutes South' and to the 'North West of Van Diemens Land.'³³ This corresponds to the Nuyts Archipelago, discovered in 1627 by Pieter Nuijts on the *Guilden Zeepard*, off Smokey Bay in South Australia. It is unfortunate that we cannot declare Jonathan Swift as our own, but England and Ireland both claim title. In a couple of respects, *Gulliver's Travels* is a classic story of an unsuccessful immigrant. Gulliver did not assimilate into the communities he encountered, the locals were too small, too big, too hairy, or the wrong species, and he was utterly miserable in England when he finally returned.

For the purpose of the exegesis I am more interested in the way Australian writing has portrayed the immigrant in period between 1788 and the time of Larry's arrival. Because Australia has produced a large and varied canon of fiction over two hundred years, I will limit my selection to what I regard as representative writers of particular eras.

Henry Kingsley was in Australia for only four years, 1853-57, but was exposed to the hardships and adventures of pioneering in southern Australia. From this experience came *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn*.³⁴ Kingsley writes about Australia from the perspective of it being a country in its own right, but with an eye on the British love of the exotic. Victorians in England and Australia had a taste for what Alexander Macmillan, in *Letters to Macmillan*, called: 'a really first class novel of the sensation kind, but without vulgarity.'³⁵

According to H. M. Green in *A History of Australian Literature*,³⁶ *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* was characteristic of Australian migrant fiction until the eighteen nineties. It was as though the reader was assumed to be an English person who would be excited by stories of battles with Aboriginals, a lost child, the rescue of the station owner's daughter from bushrangers, etc.

Rachel Henning, unlike Kingsley, settled permanently in Australia. Her letters to England in the 1850s and 60s, later published as *The Letters of Rachel Henning*,³⁷ give a more plausible account of life for a literate immigrant in Australia. *The Letters* are characterised by self-deprecating humour and a surprised eye. Henning tells of drought years, dances, the high cost of getting the sheep sheared, matchmaking, drunken stockmen, kangaroo hunts, and the loss of good workers to the gold fields. As well as local events, Henning takes a keen interest in overseas news. She writes about the ending of the American Civil War in the letter of July 3rd 1865.

We have got the April telegrams, and very lamentable they are as to the American War. We are all so sorry that the Confederates are beaten. They have made the most gallant struggle.³⁸

³³ J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Editor R. Greenberg . New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1961. 4

³⁴ C. Kingsley, *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn*

³⁵ Simon Nowell-Smith, editor. *Letters to Macmillan*. New York: Macmillan, 1967. 60

³⁶ H. Green. *A History of Australian Literature*, vol 1 Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1961. 215-230

³⁷ R. Henning. *The Letters of Rachel Henning*. Editor D. Adams. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1952.

³⁸ R. Henning, 206

I do not know if sympathy for the Confederate side was widespread in Australia or if Rachel Henning was unusual in her opinion.

Rafaello Carboni's stay in this country was as brief as Kingsley's, 1852-56, but *Eureka Stockade*³⁹ arguably stands as an Australian document comparable to Ned Kelly's *Jerilderie Letter*. The rebellious miners were representative of Australian society at the time in the sense that most were not Australian born. The leader, Peter Lalor, was Irish, the designer of the flag was a Canadian, and the committee included Germans, Welsh, Scots, English, Italians, and Americans. Carboni was an immigrant among immigrants.

After the event, Carboni was acquitted of high treason by a jury, wrote *Eureka Stockade*, and went back to Italy to write operas. According to the *Australian Encyclopaedia*, a plaque commemorating Carboni's link with Australia was unveiled in Urbino in 1974.

From the 1860s to the 90s Australian writing became increasingly a product of the Australian born, and more focused on an Australian readership. It was proper and timely that it should happen. Magazines such as *Smith's Weekly*, *Lone Hand*, and *The Bulletin*, provided a vehicle for this change.

J.F. Archibald founded *The Bulletin* in 1880 and it grew to exert enormous political and cultural influence for the next thirty years. *The Bulletin's* content was similar to the 18th century tradition of journals in which the readers were the main contributors. Contributors included Henry Lawson, A. B. Paterson, and Norman Lindsay.

Lawson's literary reputation is built on his talents as a writer of short stories, and much of his poetry is just folk verse, but it is in the verse that he shows best a cultural ambiguity underlying the nationalism. I have used the three volume *Collected Verse*, edited by Colin Roderick, to research Lawson's work. Lawson frequently portrayed the English in the Bush

³⁹ Rafaello Carboni. *Eureka Stockade*. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1969. first 1855

as incompetent, which they probably were, but was not above writing jingoistic pieces on English history. Lawson expressed a particular liking for the people of Scotland. This may have stemmed from a respect for Robert Burns. He wrote a poem in 1905 about the setting up of Burns's statue in Sydney, *Bobbie's Statue*.⁴⁰ Lawson wrote, *The Scots*⁴¹ in 1909, imitating the lowland Caledonian idiom of Burns.

Henry Lawson was the son of a Norwegian immigrant. I can only find one piece of verse that refers to the Scandinavian connection, *The Song of Broken English*.⁴²

'Tis a song of broken English – German and Russian and Dane –
Sung by a bush bred mongrel, as mad as the Prince – or as sane:
Austrian, Swiss and Pole – and a song of greater things,
By a “beery *Bulletin* scribbler” with the blood of Danish kings.

Lawson, an Australian nationalist, was a cultural amphibian. Cultural ambiguity is not just a migrant problem, it effects the next generation and beyond. People who were insecure as to their own national identity were depicting immigrants as different beings from native-born Australians.

Amid such native-born talent, and the nationalist mood of the time, the migrant voice was replaced by that of their Australian children, although there was the beginning of an Ethnic Press. For the following dates and titles I am relying on *The Ethnic Press in Australia*, published by Academia Press and Footprint Publications. A weekly, *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, was first published in 1895. A Scandinavian monthly, *Norden*, appeared from 1896. It survived until 1940. The German-language Press was the largest and oldest. It originated with *Die deutsche Post für die australischen Colonien* (The German Post for the Australian Colonies) in 1848 in Adelaide. A Pole, Charles Wroblewski, founded a French language weekly, *Le Courier Australien*, in 1892. This seems like eccentricity, but it was

⁴⁰ Henry Lawson. *Collected Verse*. Editor Colin Roderick. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1968. vol III, 127

⁴¹ Henry Lawson, vol II, 325.

smart; French at the time was a *lingua franca* among educated people from the many nations of central and eastern Europe, and there was not a sufficient number of Polish speakers in the country to support a newspaper. The paper still exists serving the needs of Francophones in Australia.

The weakness of ethnic journals, in any era, is that they are of no interest to mainstream readers, they usually limit their subject matter to home and community news, they are sometimes suspected of sedition by governments, and they continually lose readership to the mainstream Press. But they supply a need and are tenacious survivors.

The *Richard Mahoney* trilogy dominated Australian Literature during the inter-war years. Ethel Richardson, writing under the pseudonym of Henry Handel Richardson, was the daughter of an immigrant and was largely expatriate after the age of eighteen. Richardson, in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, writes sensitively of the migrant experience of exile, and fear of being buried by the Australian culture.

In Patrick White's *Voss*,⁴³ first published in 1957, the foreigner is inept in inland Australia but his incompetence is only different in degree from that of white Australians. The true experts at living in the wilderness are the indigenous people, and Voss is reliant on their charity for survival. Even the killing of Voss, by Jackie, is meted out swiftly in the manner of ending the pain of a wounded animal.

White's attitude to Australia was complex and it is not surprising. He was the son of an Australian father, but was born, and received part of his education, in England, and was arguably an immigrant and an Australian. White came from the Australian grazier class that values the overseas connection. He spent more than twenty years of his life as an expatriate in England and Greece. White was a cultural amphibian.

⁴² Henry Lawson, vol III, 2.

⁴³ Patrick White. *Voss*. London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1957.

Judah Waten's *Alien Son*⁴⁴ was an event in ethnic writing. It demonstrated to publishers that the genre could be profitable. To some extent *Alien Son* feeds on assumptions about assimilation that were current in 1948, and it caters to an Australian fascination with the pathology of the ethnic family. But the characters have a complexity that was not normally allowed to minorities fifty years ago.

The fifties and sixties saw a growth in the number of ethnic journals. The titles are too numerous to list. Yugoslav, Italian, Greek, Macedonian, Maltese, Russian, Spanish, Polish, Ukrainian and Slovene publications joined the existing ethnic papers on the rack. Most of them had some of the text in English and this tended to grow over the decade. The Maltese publications are now printed almost entirely in English and the Jewish journals always have been. According to John Burke, 'Greek Newspapers in Australia,' *The Ethnic Press in Australia*, the number of titles per national group is not always an indication of readership; it may just betray, as in the Greek Press, ideological divisions within the community. Publishing creative work was, and is still, difficult in the journals.

When *A History of Australian Literature* was published in 1961, the author, H. M. Green, was able to make a somewhat dismissive comment.

In the field of the short story, and indeed fiction generally, The New Australian [Immigrant] influence is beginning to be felt, but in neither, so far as published books are concerned, has it produced anything that needs to be mentioned here. (1411)

It depends on what you call the 'New Australian influence;' the children of immigrants, Lawson, Furphy, Henry Handel Richardson, had left a lasting effect. The reality was that in 1961 the post war immigrants were engaged in working long hours to allow their children a better existence. The most that the majority could do was pass on to their offspring a memory of alienation.

⁴⁴ Judah Waten. *Alien Son*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1952.

David Malouf's 1994 novel, *Remembering Babylon*,⁴⁵ is a tale of the encounter between Gemmy, an English castaway, and a struggling family of Scottish crofters trying to farm in Queensland. If it is meant as a generalisation on the newcomer experience it is a depressing one. The choice for the immigrant in *Remembering Babylon* is between becoming Australian middle class or oblivion.

⁴⁵ David Malouf. *Remembering Babylon*. Milsons Point, NSW: Chatto & Windus, 1993.

5 Perverting Rationality

The last two pages of *Special Risks* are deliberately ambiguous. Larry may be selecting his hole in the ground, which is the final destination of all of us, or he may be planning, however unwisely, some future rebellion. Larry is sure of one thing, he is not moving on. What is Larry rebelling against? Why should an immigrant rebel against a largely well-ordered society merely because he, or she, feels alienated?

I believe that in an age of diaspora, blood and soil are inadequate and increasingly irrelevant ways of defining nationality. Many people have no nationality and an increasing number of men and women have a deck of them. Larry, thanks to the British Empire and a fortuitous selection of parents, can claim passports from three different nations, and is not at home in any of them. There may not be a rational answer to this problem, and it could be better to seek a perverse one.

There is a minimalist definition of rationality given by J. Rawls in *Theory of Justice*.⁴⁶ It goes roughly as follows: For a person to demonstrate rationality it is necessary for them be consistent within a belief system; that means consistent in beliefs, desires and actions. This has nothing to do with morality; it is assumed that anyone arraigned in a court of law probably has a moral problem. Consistency is all!

The Rawlsian definition bears some resemblance to the instruction of Polonius to his son, Laertes, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man. (scene 1, act III)

The advice has a deceptively wise ring about it. In psychotherapy there is a view that inconsistency is evidence of neurosis; it is called 'polymorphous perversity'.⁴⁷ At the risk of

⁴⁶ J. Rawls. *Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

⁴⁷ J. Laplanche & J. Pontalis. *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1973. 306-309

seeming perverse, I take a different view. From my memory of the play, Polonius frequently spoke a lot of well-intentioned humbug. And, a little 'polymorphous perversity' may be a required survival skill. *The Good Soldier Schweik*, by Jaroslav Hasek, and *Catch 22*, by Joseph Heller, explore this approach in the psychotic world of military life

If you want to keep your identity you must change it. The most successful characters in the novel are creatures of disguise such as Jane and Michael. A rider to this is the more extreme Peru approach: if you want to keep your identity it is better not to have one. This is not quite as contradictory as it seems. It is debatable as to whether a 'self' actually exists. We may be just a series of masks. The best mythic model for an immigrant may not be Odysseus, the traveller, but instead Proteus, the shape changer.

When Salman Rushdie launched *The Satanic Verses* it got the sort of world response that other authors only dream about. It was a best seller in London and New York. The novel was banned in India and provoked riots in Pakistan. A Fatwa was proclaimed in Iran. The Italian Government stationed extra guards at the grave of Dante. A Nobel Prize winner who defended *The Satanic Verses* received death threats. At the centre of the storm there was silence; Salman Rushdie went into hiding.

I am not going to enter into the debate as to whether the novel is anti-Islamic, but *The Satanic Verses* is a rejection of racial and ideological puritanism. The need to keep belief unalloyed is the preoccupation of fundamentalists of all creeds. Fifteenth century Spain tried to 'purify' itself of Jews and Gypsies, as did Nazi Germany. In seventeenth century Britain, Cromwell's zealot army destroyed church paintings, carvings, tapestries and stained glass windows throughout the land. England now has only remnant examples of a flowering of Medieval Art. Fourteenth century stained glass windows are almost as rare in England as Buddhist sculptures are in Afghanistan.

In *Imaginary Homelands* Rushdie argues:

The *Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the pure. Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. (Rushdie, 394)

Rushdie steps beyond the looking-back-in-anger of Postcolonial literature and sees the chaos of dead empires as a beginning. A new Jerusalem? I hope not. Attempts at new societies have too often been characterised by fundamentalism and schism. We do not need any more Jonestowns. If Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is to be believed, the Massachusetts of the Pilgrim Fathers was a nasty little community where conformity was maintained by fellow colonists spying on their neighbours. I suspect that Adelaide in its first twenty years was very similar, and it is still the most gossip prone community I have ever lived in.

If Larry wants a future he must be prepared to become someone else when he emerges from the hole underneath the Adelaide Parklands.

To return briefly to Salman Rushdie:

The shards of memory acquired great status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities ... It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity. (Rushdie,12)

I suspect that in an age of diaspora the old models for nationality are now redundant. There are too many of us who cannot claim links of soil or blood. We are all amphibians now.

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Errata for *The Exegesis*

<u>Page</u>	<u>Misspelling</u>	<u>Correction</u>
9	effect	affect
18	phenomena	phenomenon
15	Geoffrey	Geoffry
34	Noumia	Noumea
58	Mahoney	Mahony

Typing and grammatical errors corrected on page.

<u>Page</u>	<u>Error</u>	<u>Correction</u>
1	Witness's	Witnesses.
12	and	who