

The Quarterly Sydney PEN Centre

freedom to write, freedom to read

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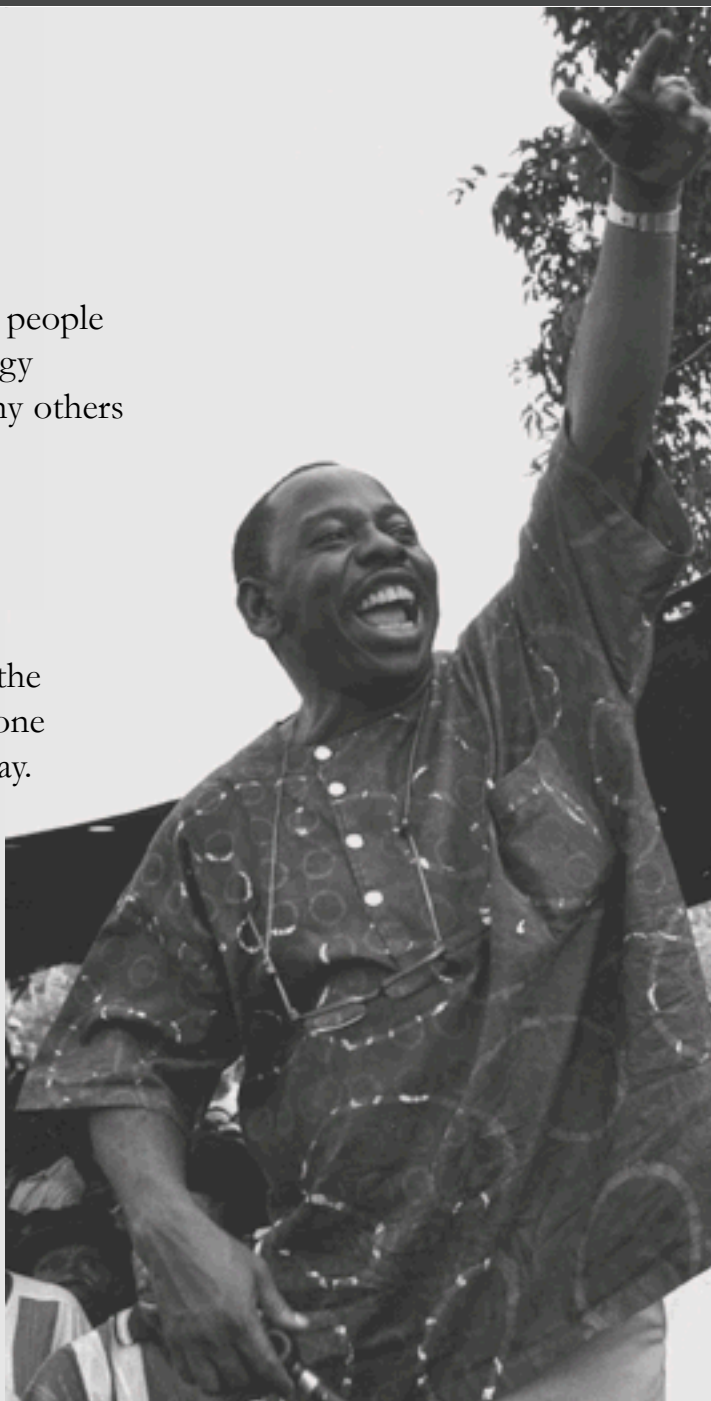
Whether I live or die is immaterial.

It is enough to know that there are people who commit time, money and energy to fight this one evil among so many others predominating world wide.

If they do not succeed today, they will succeed tomorrow.

We must keep on striving to make the world a better place for all ... each one contributing ... in his or her own way.

Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941-1995)



The Imprisoned Writer

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

• Wole Soyinka • Julian Burnside • Sarath Amarasinghe released • Shi Tao • Orhan Pamuk

Welcome to the September edition of the Sydney PEN Quarterly.



Front cover: Ken Saro-Wiwa at Ogoni Day demonstration in Nigeria. Officially organised to mark the start of UNICEF's Year of Indigenous People, the meeting was unofficially a statement against the Shell oil company. The text comes from a letter Saro-Wiwa wrote to PEN before his death.

There will be many PEN members who can vividly remember where they were on the day that they heard that writer Ken Saro-Wiwa had been executed. On 26 October, Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka will mark the 10th anniversary of the death of his friend when he gives the Annual PEN lecture at the Sydney Theatre.

Professor Soyinka's celebrated 2004 BBC Reith Lectures were entitled *Climate of Fear*, and an edited excerpt is included in this edition. In their various ways our contributors to this edition of the *Quarterly* also examine this theme: is fear itself the greatest danger?

People like to worry. They like to worry collectively; it's one reason they go to films or to theatre. As readers it keeps them turning the page. But further along this continuum it seems that with little effort we can be shifted into quite a different collective state, that of heightened and continuous dread. Our real fear should be that there is political advantage in keeping us there.

In this issue Julian Burnside puts the threat to national security into perspective, while Writers in Prison Chair Jack Durack charges PEN members to be vigilant in the face of these very real threats to our rights to liberty and freedom of expression. He also reminds us of the nine hundred writers around the world currently facing persecution 'for the peaceful practice of their profession.'

Faced with these issues, documentary maker Curtis Levy signals that the fear of even more budget cuts, particularly at the ABC, is pushing managements and networks to invest in work that avoids contentious issues, particularly when it comes to history. He describes the challenges of making a work that was deemed 'unpatriotic', and of the resolve required to get it on the air.

Elsewhere Chip Rolley describes the importance of continued support from PEN to writers, publishers and journalists in China; and Tony Birch's poetry marks the fourth anniversary of the Tampa, and the fear based campaign that followed.

On behalf of the Sydney PEN Committee I extend sincere thanks to all *Quarterly* contributors, to our ED Sharon Connolly, and to editors Paula Grunseit and Christen Cornell. I look forward to seeing you at our main fund-raising event for the year, the PEN lecture on 26 October.

Katherine Thomson, (President, Sydney PEN)

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A Changing Mask of Fear by Wole Soyinka

We are repeatedly bombarded with the notion that the world we once knew ended on September 11 2001. I have never been able to empathise with such a notion. It is within that subjective context that I found it most appropriately symbolic that I, the only African passenger aboard a British Airways flight between London and Los Angeles on that day, should be the last person on the plane to learn what had happened, and perhaps one of the last few millions of the world population to know that the world had, allegedly, undergone a permanent transformation.

What happened was quite simple: my routine on most flights is quite predictable: laptop — mealtime and winetime — a bit of reading into — sleeptime — then laptop, all of which take place in a state of near total oblivion to my surroundings. On September 11, the routine was no different. I must have been in one of my sleeptime modes when the event occurred and announcements were made. On waking up, I simply reported back for duty with my laptop. When the pilot announced that we were now crossing the Welsh border and would shortly land in Cardiff, and I learnt from the steward that this was due to some security problems, I shrugged it off. It was not, after all, the first time that my plane had been diverted or done a full turnaround, close to mid-Atlantic, on account of some technical problems.

Here, I must confess to my own immersion in personalised fear. It was nothing but fear that schooled me into travelling with only hand luggage. True, I have always been a light traveller but the habit became *de rigueur* under the terror reign of King Sanni Abacha of Nigeria. So unscrupulous were the methods of that dictatorship that its agents did not hesitate to introduce contraband, specifically hard drugs, into the luggage of the opposition, then alert the Customs officials at destination of the approaching drug baron. If I lived under any real fear during the struggle to unseat that dictator, it was definitely that, over and above anything else.

That preamble simply explains how the fear of Abacha had turned me into one baggage-less passenger you could swear by on any flight, and thus the very first passenger out of the Customs area. I ensconced myself in the bus that had been provided to take us to our hotel, settled down to read. Minutes passed, then an hour. Impatient now, I got down from the bus to find out into what hotel we were booked, then look for a taxi. I recognised some of the passengers from my flight huddled around a Mobile telephone, while others queued up for the single public contraption nearby. Thus did I begin, at long last, to suspect that something truly out of the ordinary was responsible for our turnaround. Only then did I learn, nearly eight hours after the event, that the world I knew was supposed to have disappeared, or become altered unrecognisably.

Well, I must confess that the world still looked the same to me, not only on the outside but from what I sensed inside. And this was because my mind flashed in that instant to the day, twelve years earlier when, for me, the world chose to pretend that nothing unusual had occurred over the continent of Africa, at the edge of the Sahara, knowing fully well that agents of a yet unidentified cause had sown the seeds of fear in the hearts of millions of people. The leadership of the world, including the leaders of that continent, chose to absorb this abnormality as only yet another incident in the war of causes, though even the most tenuous rules of engagement had been unilaterally re-written to eradicate the rights of the innocent.

What had I expected? I suppose an equivalent, even at that early signal, of the tragically belated sense of universal outrage that greeted the destruction of the World Trade Centre, an event timed deliberately to take the maximum toll of innocents of all nationalities, races, and religious adherence. Africans, including Nigerians, were not exempt, any more than they were in the UTA aerial inferno, an event that prefigured the later direct, terrestrial assaults on Kenya and Tanzania. 1989 for me



Photo courtesy of IISD/Earth Negotiations Bulletin

was, therefore, the moment when the world first stood still, waiting for a response whose commensurate nature was required to re-start the motions of the globe. That response was lacking, at least in intensity, certainly in its neglect of a global repudiation, and mobilisation. The world jettisoned all notion of a common humanity. That lack consecrated Lockerbie, paved the way for Air India years later, attributed briefly to Sikh extremists, and set the scene for September 11, 2001. From Lockerbie through Niger to Manhattan, the trail of fear had stretched and broadened to engulf the globe, warning its inhabitants that there were no longer any categories of the involved or the non-involved. No longer could, not just innocents, but even a community of historic victims that inhabit the African continent, lay claim to a protective immunity.

Just as there was gloating over the predicament of white settler farmers in Zimbabwe, and a history of colonial injustice is held by some to justify current injustices, as a suffocating climate of fear envelops the entire land and its citizens, white or black, even so was there gloating in places, even open festivities, over September 11, as the world was sentenced to existence in a perpetual state of fear. And the judges? Are they identified, and/or justified by history? By geography? Race? Ideology? Or

religion? That emotive last especially — religion — and unquestionably, the occupation of world centre stage by Islam during this epoch of global fear is a phenomenon that has provoked extreme reactions, such as the attribution of collective responsibility on the one hand, and the guilt-ridden, avoidance language of Political Correctness on the other.

Responses to any challenge to the security of all, or any part of the human society and indeed, survival, are bound to be varied, some shaped by the history of global relationships, others by instinctive partisanship in a world that has become truly polarised. Any course of action, or inaction, that appears to encourage impunity, does implicate, however, the submission of the world to a regimen of fear. Yet that very recognition makes it possible to propose that it is within collective, not unilateral action that we can sustain the hopes of humanity's survival. Terror against Terror may be emotionally satisfying in the immediate, but who really wants to live under the permanent shadow of a new variant of the world's — Mutual Assured Destruction?

This is an edited excerpt from 'A Changing Mask of Fear' — the first in the series of the BBC Reith Lectures given by Wole Soyinka in 2004. The full transcript of these lectures is published as Climate of Fear, Profile Books, 2004.

2005 PEN Lecture: Wole Soyinka

introduced by Bryce Courtenay on Wednesday
26 October at 6.30pm at Sydney Theatre

Bookings: Sydney Theatre (02) 9250 1999 or
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Remembering Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941 - 1995)

Ogoni! Ogoni!	It is the poisoned air
Ogoni is the land	Coursing the luckless lungs
The people, Ogoni	Of dying children
The agony of trees dying	Ogoni is the dream
In ancestral farmlands	Breaking the looping chain
Streams polluted weeping	Around the drooping neck
Filth into murky rivers	of a shell-shocked land.



Ken Saro-Wiwa. This poem was smuggled from his prison cell for the Ogoni Day celebrations on 4 January 1995.

10 November 2005 marks the tenth anniversary of the execution of writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his Ogoni colleagues by the Nigerian state. This was their punishment for campaigning against the devastation of the Niger Delta by oil companies, especially Shell and Chevron.

Ken Saro-Wiwa was born in October 1941, the eldest son of a prominent family in Ogoni, Nigeria. After leaving university he initially pursued an academic career.

During the Biafran war (1967-1970) he was a Civilian Administrator for the Port of Bonny, near Ogoni. During the 1970s he built up his businesses in real estate and retail and in the 1980s concentrated on his writing, journalism and television production.

His long-running satirical TV series *Basi & Co* was purported to be the most watched soap opera in Africa.

Two of his best known works were drawn from his observations and experiences of the Biafran war. His most famous work, *Sozaboy: a Novel in Rotten English*, is a harrowing tale of a naive village boy recruited into the army. *On a Darkling Plain*, is a diary of his experiences during the war.

Ken Saro-Wiwa was consistently concerned about the treatment of the Ogoni within the Nigerian Federation and throughout his work he often made references to the exploitation by the oil and gas industries of the poor Ogoni farmers. In 1973 he was dismissed from his post

as Regional Commissioner for Education in the Rivers State cabinet, for advocating greater Ogoni autonomy.

In 1990, Saro-Wiwa started to dedicate himself to the amelioration of the problems of the oil producing regions of the Niger Delta. Focusing on his homeland, Ogoni, he launched a non-violent movement for social and ecological justice. In this role he attacked the oil companies and the Nigerian government accusing them of waging an ecological war against the Ogoni and precipitating the genocide of the Ogoni people. He was so effective, that by 1993 the oil companies had to pull out of Ogoni. This cost him his life.

The Ogoni have been gradually ground to dust by the combined effort of the multi-national oil company, Shell Petroleum Development Company, the murderous ethnic majority in Nigeria and the country's military dictatorships.

Ken Saro-Wiwa 1992

In July 1992, Saro-Wiwa addressed the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva:

I speak on behalf of the Ogoni people. You will forgive me if I am somewhat emotional about this matter. I am Ogoni ... Petroleum was discovered in Ogoni in 1958 and since then an estimated 100 billion dollars worth of oil and gas has been carted away from Ogoniland. In return for this the Ogoni people have received nothing.

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By April 1993 Saro-Wiwa had been arrested twice and was then repeatedly denied the right to travel abroad. In June he was arrested again and charged with six counts of unlawful assembly and conspiring to publish a seditious pamphlet.

His health deteriorated in custody, resulting in him being moved to hospital and suffering serious heart problems during interrogation. He complained of “psychological torture”. He later published an account of his detention in a book called *A Month and a Day*.

The military tribunal/trial against Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues started in February 1995, when the men were finally allowed to see their lawyers. In May 1995, Saro-Wiwa smuggled a letter out of a military hospital. He wrote:

For two nights I have not slept a wink, I am being intimidated, harassed and de-humanized, even though I am supposed to be receiving medical attention ... I am like Ogoni, battered, bruised, brutalized, bloodied and almost buried.

A report into Saro-Wiwa’s trial written by leading British counsel, Michael Birnbaum QC, concluded

It is my view that the breaches of fundamental rights are so serious as to arouse grave concern that any trial before this tribunal will be fundamentally flawed and unfair.

In Late October, Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni were sentenced to death. Six of the fifteen defendants were released, including Ledum Mitee, Vice President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

On 10 November 1995, Saro-Wiwa and eight others were executed in defiance of international appeals for leniency. There was international condemnation and outrage against both the military junta and Shell. The condemnation led to the strengthening of limited sanctions, and Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth. U.K. Prime Minister John Major, described the trial as, “a fraudulent trial, a bad verdict, an unjust sentence. It has now been followed by judicial murder”.

A few days later, Shell announced that it would press ahead with a \$3.8 billion liquid natural gas project in Nigeria. “There have

been suggestions that the project should be deferred or cancelled because of recent events in Nigeria. But you have to be clear who would be hurt,” said Shell.

From Ken Saro-Wiwa’s closing testimony at his trial in 1995:

I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial. Shell is here on trial and it is as well that it is represented by counsel said to be holding a watching brief. The Company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come and the lessons learnt here may prove useful to it for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war that the company has waged in the Delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war be duly punished. The crime of the Company’s dirty wars against the Ogoni people will also be punished.

The next month, Brian Anderson, the Managing Director of Shell Nigeria admitted to the Sunday Times that a “black hole of corruption” existed in Shell’s Nigerian operations.

In May 1996, Ken Saro-Wiwa was posthumously elected to the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) Global 500 Roll of Honour for advancing the cause of environmental protection. “At all stages of his campaign, Saro-Wiwa advocated peaceful resistance to the forces that would deprive the Ogoni people of a say in the development of their region”, UNEP said in a statement.

In April 2000 there was a symbolic burial for Saro-Wiwa after the authorities blocked the release of his remains. Placed in his coffin were two of his favourite novels and his pipe, requests that he had made in his will. Over 100,000 Ogonis attended ceremonies in the week-long events to mark the occasion.

I’ll tell you this, I may be dead but my ideas will not die.

Ken Saro-Wiwa 1995

This article compiled with kind permission and consists of information and excerpts from the website www.remembersarowiva.com Please visit the site to read more about Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni people.

Fear and Freedom



Entrance to Separation Unit at Baxter Immigration Reception and Processing Centre, near Port Augusta, 12 July 2002
 Photo: Damian McDonald.
 nla.pic-an24382302-v
 Courtesy National Library of Australia.

The terrorist attack on the United States was shocking. It transfixed the world as the Twin Towers exploded and collapsed in a giant cloud. Those responsible were undoubtedly sincere but their acts put them beyond redemption in the collective mind of western democracies. The nightmare image of the second plane finding its target may be the defining image of this new century.

The responses to the attack on America might also be the defining characteristic of western democracy in the 21st century.

After the attack on September 11, the USA passed legislation which significantly erodes human rights in America. They also attacked Afghanistan to purge it of the Taliban. Thousands of people were swept up and transported to Guantanamo Bay. They have been held there without charge for years,

in appalling conditions. They have been brutalised, humiliated and tortured. They have largely been denied access to lawyers; the US government has done what it can to deny them access to courts.

“Democratic freedoms should never be sacrificed unless a compelling reason is shown. Any sacrifice of democratic freedoms must be proportional to the threat to which it responds.”

ASIO powers

Australia has also introduced draconian laws in response to September 11. The ASIO legislation was amended in 2002. It enables ASIO to detain a person incommunicado and without access to family or friends. This form of detention could last up to a week.

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Whilst a person may nominate their own legal representation, the government retains the right to veto that person or evict them at any time should the interrogator feel that they are interfering in the questioning process (for example, perhaps, by trying to give their client advice).

Initially, detention is limited to 7 days, although a further warrant may be obtained, extending the detention for a further 7 days. The time for which a person may be held is calculated by disregarding any time spent on ancillary matters such as resting, receiving medical attention, being transported, receiving legal advice, etc.

There is no right to silence and no privilege against self-incrimination. Withholding information is punishable by 5 years imprisonment. A person who has been held this way is not permitted to tell anyone that they have been interrogated by ASIO, on pain of imprisonment for 5 years.

“So, if you or I were regarded by the government as “un-Australian” in attitude or conduct, we could be locked up for life without trial. A few years ago such a possibility would have seemed absurd. It now looks disturbingly possible”

The person detained need not be suspected of anything at all. The only requirement for this form of detention is that you be a person who, according to ASIO’s belief, has information regarding terrorism. In principle, anyone who watches the Al Jazeera might be within reach of these provisions.

National Security Information (Criminal Trials) Act

The National Security Information (Criminal Trials) Act was passed in 2004. It allows the Attorney-General to certify that our national security interests would be jeopardised if particular evidence were given in a trial, or if a particular witness were called. If a certificate is presented to a court, the court must adjourn the trial and hold a hearing to determine whether that evidence or that witness can be called. The hearing may take place in the absence of the accused and his lawyers. Whilst the judge must consider the impact on the trial of the exclusion

of the evidence, he or she must give principal weight to the certificate of the Attorney General. It is a recipe for unfair trials.

Human Rights in Australia

It is easy to assume that basic human rights are secure in Australia. Some recent decisions of the High Court contradict that assumption. The decision in the case of al Kateb (August 2004) concerned the case of a stateless Palestinian. He had come to Australia as a boat person and sought asylum. The Migration Act provides that a person who comes to Australia without papers must be detained, and must remain in detention until either they get a visa or they are removed from the country.

You might expect that a government which has paraded itself virtuously as committed to a fair and decent society might quickly amend the law to account for this anomalous case. What the Howard government did in fact was to argue that, even though Mr al Kateb has committed no offence in Australia, he can be held in detention for the rest of his life.

On 6 August 2004 the High Court accepted that proposition. The legislation which provides for indefinite detention – for life if necessary – of an innocent person is constitutionally valid in Australia. On the same day the court held that the conditions in detention do not prevent it from being constitutionally valid.

Officially, solitary confinement is not used in Australia’s detention system. Officially, recalcitrant detainees are placed in the Management Unit. The truth is that the Management Unit at Baxter is solitary confinement bordering on total sensory deprivation. I have viewed a video tape of one of the Management Unit cells. It shows a cell about 3 ½ metres square, with a mattress on the floor. There is no other furniture; the walls are bare. A doorway, with no door, leads into a tiny bathroom. The cell has no view outside; it is never dark. The occupant has nothing to read, no writing materials, no TV or radio; no company yet no privacy because a video camera observes and records everything, 24 hours a day. The detainee is kept in the cell 23 ½ hours a day. For half an hour a day he is allowed into a small exercise area where he can see the sky.

The Howard government has floated the idea



Single en-suite room in the Separation Unit, Baxter Immigration Reception and Processing Centre, near Port Augusta, 12 July 2002
Photo: Damian McDonald.
nla.pic-an24382228-v
Courtesy National Library of Australia.

of stripping a person of their citizenship if they do or say “un-Australian” things. If they proceed with this idea it will produce the result that an Australian citizen could become a non-citizen by administrative order. The immediate consequence would be detention, as the person would fall within the definition of “unlawful non-citizen” in the Migration Act.

So, if you or I were regarded by the government as “un-Australian” in attitude or conduct, we could be locked up for life without trial. A few years ago such a possibility would have seemed absurd. It now looks disturbingly possible.

In December 2004 the House of Lords decided a case concerning UK anti-terrorist laws which allow terror suspects to be held without trial indefinitely. By a majority of 8 to 1 they held that the law impermissibly breached the democratic right to liberty. Lord Hope said that “the right to liberty belongs to each and every individual”. Lord Bingham traced these rights to Magna Carta, and made the point that the struggle for democracy has long focused on the need to protect individual liberty against the might of executive government.

Lord Nicholls said:

Indefinite imprisonment without charge or trial is anathema in any country which observes the rule of law. It deprives the detained person of the protection a criminal trial is intended to afford. Wholly exceptional circumstances must exist before this extreme step can be justified.

Lord Hoffman said:

The real threat to the life of the nation ... comes not from terrorism but from laws such as these.

Recognition and protection of basic rights and freedoms has been the objective

of the common law since the time of Cromwell. We had thought they were won. In the aftermath of September 11, the old certainties have been destroyed. Without any attempt to show how events could have been altered if these laws had existed before September 11, the government is sweeping away liberties which, over the course of 4 centuries, have come to be seen as the bedrock of western democracy.

Over the past decade, about 800 people have died each year in terrorist attacks. The exception was 2001, when 3500 people died. These are global figures. Each year about 15 million children die of starvation. In 2001 3.1 million people died of AIDS. Each year 500,000 people die of handgun injuries unrelated to military conflict or terrorism. If the money and effort which have been directed against terrorism had instead been directed against these other, avoidable, deaths we might all be safer.

Democratic freedoms should never be sacrificed unless a compelling reason is shown. Any sacrifice of democratic freedoms must be proportional to the threat to which it responds. The Howard government has set out to frighten us into sacrificing the heritage of four hundred years and 2 world wars. We should recognise what they are doing, before it is too late.

Julian Burnside

Julian Burnside QC is an eminent, Australian human rights advocate and author.

Art and Politics: Finding the Balance

For me being political means being involved with my community; dealing with the human condition. As a filmmaker I feel I have a responsibility to provide some kind of insight into what is going on.

Films and books which are politically relevant are not necessarily less valid as art. Look at David Hare's plays, like *Stuff Happens*, or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Shakespeare too was obsessed by the politics of power, amongst other things. Ken Loach and Mike Moore's films have been showered with awards. For me there is no argument. Art driven by conscience or concern can be great art. But at the same time to be an effective filmmaker, I think it is important not to have a doctrinally driven agenda. I personally believe all artists must keep an open mind, free from the restrictions of the political agendas of any group.

These days the major parties are hardly a beacon for anybody in terms of human rights issues. Both believe in the barbaric practice of mandatory detention of asylum seekers.

More filmmakers would be dealing with these and other issues troubling Australia if it were not for two things. Firstly, most Australian documentary filmmakers rely on government funding and on government-owned television stations to show their work. SBS has been more open to screening challenging and cutting edge films. It took on my last film, *The President Versus David Hicks*.

The ABC has been hugely intimidated by severe budget cuts. One of the areas hit most by the cuts is documentary. In order to get on side with government, managements tend to concentrate on producing programs which do not deal with contentious issues.

Australian history, especially, gets kid glove treatment. We are frequently presented with nostalgic films about Australia's past war exploits. The Government likes these kinds of patriotic films and puts money into them. These days history is often presented as reality

TV. Like *Big Brother*, the reality TV version of history is to throw a number of so-called average Australians into a house or settlement and see how they get on. There is of course some history in these programs, but there is little attempt to analyse issues that go to the heart of our nationhood, like the invaders versus settlers debate. Aboriginal resistance is generally forgotten or downplayed. Aborigines are generally presented as genial bystanders to the great imperial endeavour.

The other major obstacle for filmmakers is the closed nature of Australian government. Australia is not an open democracy. What goes on in our institutions is not generally accessible to the media. Only now are the horrific details of our treatment of asylum seekers coming out, largely because Australian citizens got caught up in those razor wire hell holes. Abuses in Abu Ghraib were revealed courtesy of digital pictures from mobile phones, but you can't take even a mobile phone into an Australian refugee prison. So our darkest secrets will probably remain hidden. And Australians, like Germans, in the late 1930s will remain happily oblivious. We know, but we don't know! If it's not on television, it isn't real. If Ray Martin isn't telling us, it didn't happen.

I have found other governments more accessible and willing to be transparent than Australian governments. Could you imagine an Australian Prime Minister allowing a filmmaker to film him over an extended time, over three or four months, so that Australians might gain insights into our government and how our leader operates? I have to admit that I have never asked John Howard, but I have written to him for interviews and input into films I was making. I wrote to find out the Government's position on David Hicks, but got no reply.

When he was President of Indonesia, Abdurrachman Wahid, a man who ruled over more than 200 million people, was happy for me to spend 4 months living in the Presidential palace, filming his life and accompanying him

wherever he went. The result was *High Noon in Jakarta*, probably the only film ever made with such intimate access to a world leader. Abdurrachman Wahid is a great humanitarian, who believed in involving the people as much as possible - not keeping them in the dark.

One of the things that turned me on to making a film about David Hicks, the Australian who joined the Taliban, was the total demonisation of him by both politicians and media. Our then Attorney General said David Hicks was one of the 10 most dangerous men in the world. Together with Bentley Dean, co-director of *The President Versus David Hicks*, I set out to discover the truth. From the moment the film was funded, there was vitriolic criticism of the fact that a film about a supposed terrorist should receive funding from government sources. Adverse judgements were made about the film long before it saw the light of day. Murdoch journalists continually labelled the film as being sympathetic to a terrorist. This before anybody had seen the film.

A journalist phoned the Minister for the Arts, Rod Kemp, and said to him "Do you realise taxpayers' money is funding a sympathetic film about a terrorist?" The minister commissioned a report but fortunately for the film and for

Australian democracy, did not take the matter further. The film was shown on SBS and went on to win both the AFI Award for Best Documentary Film and the Logie for Best Television Documentary.

My intention in making the film was to try to understand David Hicks; to help audiences make their own judgements. David's father and lawyer allowed us to use David's letters, which gave some sense of his motivations and what he was doing in Afghanistan. David's father helped us with the portrayal of his son, but always said whatever we found we could include. He just wanted his son to get a fair trial. Three and a half years later, David Hicks is still waiting for a fair trial.

Documentaries can help people understand societies other than their own. They can look past sledgehammer style characterisations, to show that those labelled as the enemy or as evil, may not be that different to you and me.

This is the edited text of an address given by filmmaker and PEN member Curtis Levy to a Sydney Mechanics School of Arts lunchtime seminar on 26 July 2005. The seminar, the second in a series, also featured Sydney PEN's Deputy President, Rosie Scott.



"You're in luck ... your government has sent a delegation to see you get a fair hanging"
December 2002
Cartoonist: Alan Moir
nla.pic-vn3536523-v
Courtesy National Library of Australia.

PEN World Congress Report

Over 275 writers from 80 PEN centres attended the 71st World Congress of PEN in Bled, Slovenia.



From left: Kadija George (African Writers Abroad Centre), Denise Leith, Judith Buckrich (Melbourne PEN) and Lucy Popescu (English PEN) about to attend a dinner for all PEN delegates hosted by the mayor of Ljubljana at Ljubljana Castle.

With so many writers working together it was an intense week of discussion and debate, which opened on June 18 with International PEN President Jiri Grusa invoking the “common sense” of PEN; “PEN means common goals and similar souls,” he said. “It means values, fellowship and credibility.” Demonstrating the international reach of the organisation and its values, Mr. Grusa welcomed Wang Yi, a writer and representative of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, as the first independent writer from the People’s Republic of China to attend a PEN Congress since 1989.

Throughout the week, the Slovenian PEN Centre hosted a series of discussions and performances showcasing both Slovenian and international literature, but the main focus of the Congress was on the committee sessions: Writers in Prison, Women Writers and Writers for Peace, the various dialogue sessions, and three intense days of meetings of the Assembly of Delegates.

Sydney PEN, represented by Denise Leith and Chip Rolley, presented a resolution condemning attacks on journalists with impunity in times of war and conflict, by members of some of the world’s most disciplined militaries. The resolution and its background were outlined in the June edition of the *Quarterly*.

The first few days of the Congress were given over to the committee meetings at which Sydney’s resolution was presented and discussed. At no time was the resolution opposed, rather discussion centred on the possibility of broadening it to include the killing of journalists in war by any group. Sydney PEN argued that there was little, if anything, that could be done to hold extremists who kill journalists to account, but there are procedures and channels of accountability in disciplined militaries.

The resolution was passed without dissent on the second day by the Writers in Prison Committee. It was then presented and passed, with one abstention (Danish PEN), by the Assembly of Delegates. To satisfy those who wanted resolutions condemning terrorist attacks on journalists, and American PEN’s desire for a resolution it could take to its government, a number of parallel resolutions were passed ‘in session’.

The passing of the resolution means that International PEN is now committed to investigating and reporting on the killing of journalists with impunity in war by members of the world’s most disciplined militaries.

Looming large over the Congress was the memory of Arthur Miller, who was elected to the presidency of International PEN the last time PEN convened a congress in Bled in 1965, and who once described PEN as a fellowship moved by the hope that one day the work it tries and often manages to do will no longer be necessary.

At the closing press conference of the Congress, Mr. Grusa lamented the fact that the organisation may in fact be more necessary than ever, with writers who promote civil values encountering strong nationalistic, religious and political pressures around the world.

Denise Leith

PEN China Report: One Country, Two Systems



Nicholas Jose and Chip Rolley at the museum house of Cai Yuanpei, founder of Chinese PEN.

“Maintain the international pressure on human rights.” That was the answer from one Chinese Internet essayist when Nicholas Jose and I asked what Sydney PEN and other PEN centres could do to support Chinese writers.

At the request of the Board of International PEN, we visited the People’s Republic of China in May this year to meet with authors, publishers, translators, journalists, and Internet essayists.

Sydney PEN chaired the meeting of International PEN’s China Network at the 2004 International PEN Congress in Tromsø, Norway and has promoted the view that PEN should be proactive in engaging China. Our goal was to engage the Chinese writing community directly, to learn of their concerns and to better understand the role played by the several PEN centres there. We learned about a publishing and writing environment that is flourishing, diverse and highly commercialised, while at the same time continuing to pose the threat of censorship and imprisonment when writers venture into territory deemed

politically controversial.

International PEN has nine centres with some relationship — either linguistic, political, cultural or historical — with China, including three mainland-based centres (essentially part of the Chinese Writers Association, a quasi-governmental organisation that operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture); two centres in Hong Kong; one in Taipei; a Tibetan Writers Abroad Centre; and two centres based overseas, Chinese Writers Abroad and Independent Chinese PEN.

The latter has members all over the world, including in Australia, and a growing number in the PRC. We travelled from Hong Kong to Beijing to Shanghai to Hangzhou, meeting with over 40 people, including members of the mainland “official” PENs — Chinese PEN (Beijing) and Shanghai PEN — members of Hong Kong (English-speaking) and Hong Kong (Chinese) PENs, and members of Independent Chinese PEN (in Beijing and Hangzhou).

continued over page

The overall outcome of this China delegation and the subsequent report made to the International PEN Board may indeed be a watershed moment in International PEN's engagement with China. We have gone a long way toward understanding the issues of concern to those writers enjoying the opportunities created by China's increasingly market-driven publishing industry and the large body of young, urban readers fuelling it. In addition we've been able to advise International PEN on the Chinese Writers Association's view of International PEN and its approach toward promoting free expression.

We have launched a drive to have more PENs from around the world visit China and engage with Chinese writers directly — particularly the members of Independent Chinese PEN, a centre not affiliated with the Chinese government. With one of our meetings marred by police detaining two members of Independent Chinese

PEN, we also learned first-hand the harassment faced by these writers.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that such engagement provides some protection to those who might be at risk in a political environment that still contains substantial dangers for writers wishing to freely express their political views. Two members of Independent Chinese PEN, from Beijing and Hong Kong respectively, will attend PEN's Asia Pacific Writers' Network Roundtable, hosted by Melbourne PEN in November.

Chip Rolley

Australian PEN's report on China was made possible with support from CAL's Research and Development Cultural Fund and the Myer Foundation.

Yahoo! Helps China Imprison Journalist



Shi Tao

“Do you Yahoo?” So goes the search engine and email provider's ad campaign. It's a question more and more Chinese web users should be asking themselves.

Court documents reveal that the Hong Kong-based subsidiary of Yahoo! provided police on the mainland with information that proved critical to the conviction of Chinese poet and journalist Shi Tao on charges of “revealing state secrets abroad”. The conviction earned Shi Tao 10 years in prison.

Sydney PEN members will be familiar with Shi Tao, who was named an honorary member of our centre earlier this year. The alleged “secrets” he is convicted of revealing were in fact his notes from a newspaper editorial meeting in 2004, outlining media restrictions imposed by the Chinese propaganda ministry in the lead up to the 15th anniversary of the June 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. Shi Tao sent these notes by email, using his Yahoo personal email account, to an overseas website.

The court documents reveal that Yahoo! Holdings (Hong Kong) provided police in Changsha, Hunan province, Shi Tao's hometown, with vital information that linked

Shi Tao's email message and account with the identity code of his personal computer.

Yahoo! has refused to offer any details beyond the following statement: “Just like any other global company, Yahoo! must ensure that its local country sites must operate within the laws, regulations and customs of the country in which they are based.” But given the Yahoo! subsidiary is based in Hong Kong and not the mainland, it is not likely they were under any legal obligation to give this information to the Changsha police — to say nothing of the moral obligation not to do so.

Sydney PEN has written to the chairman of Yahoo! in the US, Terry Semel, protesting his company's actions. We invite our members to do the same. (See www.pen.org.au for further information.)

Shi Tao is a member of Independent Chinese PEN, which has members both inside and outside the PRC. On 2 June, the Hunan Province High People's Court rejected his appeal without giving him a hearing. His mother has applied for a review of that appeal.

Chip Rolley

Writers in Prison

The good news first. The Writers in Prison Sub-Committee had been pursuing the case of the Chinese writer and professor of law, Yuan Hong Bing, whose application for a protection visa last year had been met with nothing but silence from immigration in response. Despite the bureaucratise of replies to Sydney PEN's letter to Amanda Vanstone on Yuan's behalf we were delighted to hear that Yuan's protection visa was granted on 22 July 2005.

"I have gotten protection visa from Immigration Bureau in Sydney this very morning! Hereby I am writing to share with you and friends of PEN my happiness and feeling of obtaining real freedom. Please accept my sincere appreciation in your upright supporting for me in the past." Yuan Hong Bing

Other good news is rather thin on the ground. The 71st Congress of PEN held in June heard that the Writers in Prison Committee is today monitoring the cases of over nine hundred writers who have disappeared, been imprisoned, tortured, threatened, attacked, and killed for the peaceful practice of their profession.

Many governments in our Asia Pacific Region fail to uphold rights of their citizens to free expression notwithstanding the lip service paid to those rights in many of their constitutions. In countries such as Bangladesh and the Philippines, the International Committee continued to receive reports about the intimidation and killing of journalists while China continued to pursue its hardline policy against internet writers and publishers. Burma and Vietnam also continued to attract the concern of the Committee with at least nine writers imprisoned in Vietnam for one of whom, Pham Hong Son, Sydney PEN again made representations to the Vietnamese government following earlier representations last year.

Elsewhere, and particularly in Middle Eastern countries, crackdowns on freedom of expression continued while disturbing indications have been provided in Western countries, including our own, that current preoccupations about security may lead to significant restrictions on rights hitherto regarded as unquestionable.

It will be the role of PEN to ensure, as far as possible, that the appropriate balance is struck and that whatever laws are passed, they will leave our fundamental values intact. Otherwise we will indeed have surrendered our way of life to the terrorists in precisely the fashion that our country's leaders are constantly assuring us we will not do.

Members of the Writers in Prison Sub-Committee have recently written on behalf of imprisoned and mistreated writers to the governments of China, Vietnam, members of the former Soviet Union, various Middle Eastern and African countries and have mobilised the support of volunteer letter writers for those imprisoned in Sierra Leone and Cuba. Meantime our volunteer "minders" have sought to intervene personally on behalf of Sydney PEN's honorary members and particularly the two journalists imprisoned in Cuba.

It is worth quoting from "minder" Naomi May's article published recently in an International PEN newsletter.

Jorge Olivera Castillo, former editor of Havana Press, was among seventy five Cuban dissidents rounded up in March 2003. Sentenced to eighteen years, he was put in a cell with four others, a hole for a lavatory, no natural light and not enough space for them all to lie down at once. He later suffered a variety of bizarre torments and became ill, losing thirty pounds from high blood pressure, high cholesterol and two parasites, Giardia and E. coli. There was an international outcry and after twenty one months he was conditionally released on health grounds ... he lives in terror of being returned to prison.

I thank my fellow committee members and all our volunteer letter writers for their support. However erratic our efforts may sometimes seem and however dark the black hole into which our communications seem to disappear, our efforts and the knowledge that they are being made may be the only ray of light for those eking out their existences in dungeons too horrible for us to even imagine.

Jack Durack

Jack Durack is a Sydney barrister and Chair of Sydney PEN Centre's Writers in Prison Committee.

Orhan Pamuk facing jail threat for denigrating Turkey



Photo:
Feriha Guney

Turkish writer, Orhan Pamuk, will face an Istanbul court in December for his comments reported by a Swiss newspaper. He stands to be imprisoned for three years if found guilty.

Pamuk is charged under Article 301/1 of the Turkish Penal Code with insulting Turkey and faces an extra sentence because he made the alleged insults overseas.

One of Turkey's best known authors, Pamuk's works including *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, *Snow*, and *My Name is Red* (for which he won the IMPAC award) are widely read in Australia, and have been published in over twenty languages.

"To read Orhan Pamuk is to enter the world of his Turkish experience, its history, and its culture with an immediacy that makes it our own. If Turkey is a place that is fully alive now in the world's consciousness, it is through this man," said PEN member, author David Malouf.

Pamuk is quoted in the Swiss newspaper, *Tages Anzeiger* on 6 February as saying, "Thirty thousand Kurds and a million Armenians were killed in these lands and nobody but me dares to talk about it".

"We are appalled and astounded that Orhan Pamuk should be subjected to prosecution under a law so plainly at odds with the most basic notions of free speech," says Sydney PEN President, Katherine Thomson.

"Turkey has ratified both the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the European Convention on

Human Rights, both of which see freedom of expression as central. This clause in Turkey's Penal Code is clearly contrary to these very principles," she says.

John W. Durack, Chair of Sydney PEN Writers in Prison Committee urges the Turkish Government to review the approach they have taken where writers have been prosecuted for doing no more than criticising the government of the country.

He says that although Turkey's crackdown on free speech has declined in the past decade, International PEN claims over fifty writers, journalists and publishers are before the courts in Turkey. This is despite amendments to the Penal Code aimed at meeting demands for human rights improvements as a condition for Turkey's application to join the European Union. The most recent changes were enacted in June this year.

Journalists in Turkey have staged protests against the revised Penal Code and in April International PEN and the International Publisher's Association released a statement to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which described the newly revised Penal Code as "deeply flawed".

Sydney PEN is urging its members to appeal to the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Minister of Justice TC Adalet Bakanligi, and the Turkish Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Mr Okanden.

Daniela Torsh

Sarath Amarasinghe released from Baxter Detention Centre

It is with great pleasure and relief that we announce the release of Honorary PEN member Sarath Amarasinghe from Baxter Detention Centre after nearly four years.

Sarath is a Sri Lankan businessman who was forced to flee his homeland and family after he received death threats, due to his involvement in the Opposition Party.

He contributed a poem to *Another Country* but also most notably wrote and distributed a newsletter called *Baxter News* (he is now up to the 22nd issue) to highlight as he put it, 'the abuses of human rights happening in Baxter.' This of course made his life more difficult in detention.

To honour the courage of this undertaking he was chosen to be the writer symbolised by the Empty Chair at the Day of the Imprisoned Writer event held by Sydney PEN in 2004.

Earlier this year, on behalf of Sydney PEN, Tom Keneally, Denise Leith and I held an overnight fast outside the DIMIA building. This was in support of Sarath and his fellow Sri Lankan detainees who were holding a hunger strike because of their desperation about their seemingly imminent deportation to Sri Lanka and an uncertain fate. This received a great deal of publicity including overseas coverage in the *Washington Post* and *Asia-Pacific Daily News Review* and we believed also helped to raise awareness of their plight in Australia.

Sarath wrote: 'You, PEN and Peter [Peter Job of Melbourne PEN] contributed vastly to my freedom. I never forget it Rosie. Mira also did a lot using her experience.'

We congratulate Sarath and wish him and his fiance Anna a peaceful new life in Australia and success in his new electrical business.

Rosie Scott



Photo: Mira Wroblewski

Writing Competition Making a Difference for Human Rights

Sydney PEN committee members, Rosie Scott and Tom Keneally, have added their support to a writing competition encouraging young people in rural New South Wales to learn about human rights.

The competition, "Make a Difference for Human Rights" has been organised by local Amnesty International Australia (AIA) convener, Carla Anderson and is a project of Crookwell's AIA team.

Crookwell is a small rural community on New South Wales' Southern Tablelands and its newly-formed local Amnesty International team is enjoying support from a broad cross-

section of the community – from community groups to churches to the Shire Council and the local high school, where staff encourage human rights education activities in the classroom including visits from Amnesty members.

"Make a Difference" has been supported by school teachers in the Crookwell/Goulburn districts and Crookwell Shire Library has organised a human rights display to run in conjunction with the competition. PEN's support has been invaluable for encouraging would-be young writers.



(Left) Crookwell Library Manager, Kerri-ann Pratley and Crookwell AIA Convener, Carla Anderson, at the library's human rights display, organised to support the writing competition.

Donations

As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, Sydney PEN Centre relies heavily upon donations, membership, sponsorship and other forms of support.

Donations, large or small, are always greatly appreciated and play a very important role in allowing Sydney PEN to continue its work.

Sydney PEN is not yet registered as a deductible gift recipient, however it has received advice that contributions, including membership fees and donations, could be regarded by many professional writers as related to the conduct of their professions and as relevant to earning an income from writing.

Intending contributors, whether by donation or otherwise, should confirm with their financial advisors that their particular contributions would be deductible for tax purposes.

Please make cheques out to International PEN Sydney Centre or call 02 9514 2783 (Tuesday to Thursday) to make credit card payments.

Donations and inquiries should be sent to:

International PEN Sydney Centre,

C/- Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

UTS PO Box 123, Broadway

NSW 2007

New Members

Sydney PEN welcomes new members:

Hunter Cordaiy, Omid Ahmadi, Sandra Forbes, Carole Cogdan, Steven Herrick, Monica Massarel, Ali Jane Smith, James Tobin, Ruth Skilbeck, Don Reid, Jacki Weaver, Geoffery Atherden, Geoff Morrell, Sally Heighway, Kerry Comerford, GERALYN Smith, John Bell, Anna Volska.

Recent Donors

Donations have been received from the following members. Sydney PEN is extremely grateful for their generosity:

John Tranter, Sandra Forbes, Virginia Spate, Carole Cogdan, Jacki Weaver, Geoff Morrell, Kerry Comerford.

Special thanks go to the law firm, Mallesons Stephen Jaques.

Publishing Partners

Sydney PEN has introduced a new category of membership for Publishing Partners. Publisher members will be listed as partners on our website and brochure.

There is a long tradition of the publishing industry around the world offering such support to PEN and we very much hope that Australian publishers, large and small, will become part of PEN's community. Membership fees are set at three levels and are determined by the size of the publishing operation concerned.

For more information please contact pen@uts.edu.au

Harper Collins is among the first publishers Sydney PEN has approached and has become our first Publishing Partner. Sydney PEN is also grateful to Harper Collins for its support of the writers in prison postcard (as shown on the back cover of this edition), thousands of which will be distributed around Sydney in the months leading up to the Day of the Imprisoned Writer on 10 November.

Asia and Pacific Writers Network (APWN) Inaugural Roundtable Meeting and Public Program

Over the past few years, the Asia and Pacific Writers' Network, an initiative of Australian PEN Centres in partnership with Asialink, has been gathering writers from across those regions, and momentum.

Two early visions, one of a multilingual website that publishes the regions' writing and a directory of writers and writing culture; and the second, an opportunity to meet, 'in the flesh', will be realised this year. The website is at www.apwn.net.

"Going Beyond Borders — Creative Strategies for Global Harmony", the inaugural Roundtable meeting and public program will take place from 6 to 9 November in Melbourne. Thirty to forty writers and members of PEN Centres in the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, Japan, Fiji, China, Singapore and Australia,

including Sydney PEN, will gather for 3 days of presentations and discussions about writing, freedom of speech and issues to do with linguistic diversity and rights; multiple forms of censorship; and access to publication and communication. Writers will share information and ideas, discuss issues and look at ways that we can better work together. On Sunday 6 November, a public series of thematically linked readings and discussions will be held to celebrate these writers and writings. For further information contact: info@apwn.net.

Asia and Pacific Writers Network gratefully acknowledges the support of: Toyota Foundation, through the Asian Neighbors Network Program; Japan Foundation, through the Grant Program for Intellectual Exchange Projects; City of Melbourne; Arts Victoria and the Myer Foundation.

The Day of the Imprisoned Writer

Ken Saro-Wiwa's sentence was a landmark case for International PEN, which joined with governments and environmentalists worldwide, to call for reprieve.

Since then, many hundreds more writers and journalists have been imprisoned, tortured and attacked for the practice of their profession. Yet the experience of collaboration in November 1995 served to underline the strength of the PEN movement and how PEN members will continue to protest against such injustices.

Sydney PEN, along with PEN Centres around the world, will be remembering the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa on 10 November, at our Day of the Imprisoned Writer.

Please join Sydney PEN for an evening of readings of a play on Saro-Wiwa and catch up on what has happened since last year when our Day of the Imprisoned Writer's 'empty chair' was given over to Baxter detainee, Sarath Amarasinghe.

Gleebooks, Glebe Point Road from 6.00pm to approximately 8.15pm.

VALE Jean Dixon

Sydney PEN was sad to learn that Jean Dixon, novelist, short story and non-fiction writer died on 8 June 2005.

Jean was on the Sydney committee of PEN for 10 years, representing Sydney Pen at the Hamburg International Congress. She was Editor of the *Quarterly* from 1981 to 1986.

**Following them home: The Fate of the Returned Asylum Seekers by David Corlett
Melbourne: Black Inc., 2005 AUS\$24.95 ISBN 097 507 6965**

David Corlett is on a mission, a quest to discover the truth about the fate of Australia's deported asylum seekers. Referring to the 'mandatory detention regime' as a feature of 'our national identity', his travels take him to Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran — the main countries of origin of those who were sent back.

What he saw there could not be more shocking. Some returnees were homeless and jobless. Others were being persecuted. Some were in hiding and living in fear. Many simply could not find their families and had no idea what had happened to them. In short, Corlett found people who had become 'ruins of their former selves'.

Six months after his deportation to Afghanistan from Nauru, Qasim Ali had still not located his family who had lived in Kandahar before his departure. He was staying in Australian-funded, short-term accommodation in a Kabul suburb. But his time there was about to expire. 'He had no idea where he would go. He had no family to fall back on. He had no job.'

After looking for his family in neighboring countries, Qasim Ali gave up his search and lived in seclusion. He 'sits in his room and just stares at the wall. Sometimes he cries.' 'In his early twenties, Qasim Ali is already a broken man.'

When Afghani teenager, Abdullah, showed up at his former home, he found that his uncle had taken it over. The uncle threatened to kill him if he stayed so Abdullah was forced to travel illegally to neighbouring countries in search of his family and was badly beaten by border police.

How responsible are we for the harm, and sometimes even deaths, our policies have inflicted on people who once sought asylum in our land? This is a blunt question but Corlett is careful not to dictate his own opinions. He

challenges the reader for an answer.

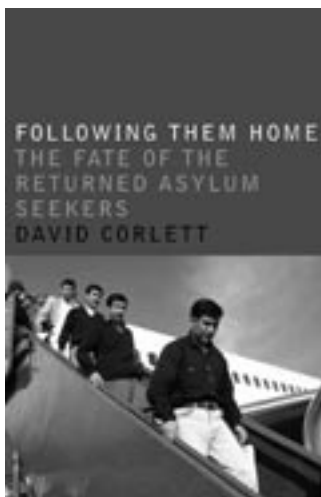
'Following them Home' is a provocative book raising serious questions about Australia's practices towards asylum seekers here and abroad. Through Corlett's eyes, these practices look decidedly suspicious and he holds both local and international agencies accountable. He has done a meticulous job as an investigative journalist, although he refuses to refer to himself as such. Like Kabul carpet seller, Hajji, 'who had gained wisdom through a life of struggle and survival in Afghanistan', Corlett makes us disagree with him when he claims that he is only 'an academic'. He has certainly taken up where we 'journos' have left off, out of complacency.

There is still room for us to go out there and dig for more. Perhaps by working on the well-publicised Bakhtiyari story? With this book, the family's mystery only deepens, their origin remaining a puzzle. Corlett could only establish one telephone contact with their eldest child, Alamdar. He attributes this failure to the lack of trust that the family has developed throughout its painful experience in Australia with the media and who could blame them?

It seems we have always seen the world through our self-centered interests and that human suffering only becomes news when Australians are involved. Some major disasters never rate a flicker on our radar screens. We barely mention a plane crash if there are no Australian victims yet one injured 'Aussie' among hundreds of dead becomes a lead story.

Until we learn to see with both eyes, we can never be fair. Corlett shows us the way.

Ghassan Nakboul is a journalist with SBS Radio's Arabic program. He won a Walkley Award for his feature The Five Mysteries of SIEVX.



Do Not Disturb: Is The Media Failing Australia? Edited by Robert Manne
Melbourne: Black Inc., 2005 AUS\$29.95 ISBN 0975076949

From the beginning Australian journalism has been inhabited by drunks, poets, visionaries and gunmen — too many madmen, not enough steady measurers. But here in one volume are ten bright shining talents, print, radio and television journalists with the artist's courage to go where the imagination leads.

And where is that? Robert Manne tells us in the introduction that the 'powerful magazine culture' of the US and Britain where the questions raised by *Do Not Disturb* can be discussed does not exist in Australia. Hence this magazine-book.

As it happens, Manne's chapter, Murdoch and the War on Iraq, was published in the *Monthly* in July. Change in the media is so — I would say if I were a traditionalist — like greased lightning, that Manne is white-anting his own introduction while the book is in production. (Schwartz Publishing is the hydra responsible for both.)

Where is print-culture, in Australia and the world, headed? Australian newspaper publishers' reactions to the Internet have been tardy, short-sighted and thick-headed. As Eric Beecher, former Sydney Morning Herald editor, now Text Media founder and major shareholder, points out, today 'the proportion of the population that is buying or reading newspapers has collapsed.'

There were 1.2 million newspapers sold every day in Sydney in 1947, when the population was 1.5 million. Today, with a population around 4.5 million, there are fewer than 700,000 newspapers sold daily. Beecher says: 'Three times the population, almost half the number of newspapers sold.'

Readers are both better-educated and more sceptical than ever. Historically, ownership is more concentrated than it's been since Sydney was a prison. The media is dumbing down, producing a culture where celebrity gossip and lifestyle journalism is the core 'product'; to meet the demands of profit-driven shareholders, corporate managers have leached or ignored the ideas of public responsibility which were once central.

Inertia-sodden newspaper managements at the two most influential metropolitan daily newspapers in Australian history, the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, neglected their classified advertising so incompetently that they opened the way for newcomer Seek.com to leach revenue from the rivers of gold that subsidised quality journalism in Sydney and Melbourne for six generations.

Quentin Dempster and Margaret Simons report on the sinister filleting of the ABC. Jack Waterford, *Canberra Times* Editor-in-chief, one of those men with the talent, verve and balance always in short supply in capital city papers, reminds us that so tightly scripted have election campaigns become that senior political reporters stay away: the chances of a politician saying something interesting — a flash of anger, a glimpse of the real man or woman — having become so rare.

To Jon Faine of ABC 774 Melbourne, 'talk radio has overtaken all other forms of media — electronic or print — as a political medium in Australia.' Historian Dennis Glover argues that the media as a whole is biased — toward the Coalition. David McKnight contrasts Lachlan Murdoch's rhetorical enthusiasm for diversity and his loathing of conformity with News Corporation's distaste for diversity and enforcement of conformity.

With his usual urgent clarity, David Marr examines the reporting of the immigration scandals. He is pessimistic: 'the media will most likely drift into its habit of helping Australians live with the brutalities of the system — by, as much as possible, ignoring them.'

What can we do about all this? Create new mass organs, says Guy Rundle. Fight, says Quentin Dempster. Refuse to be intimidated, says Jack Waterford. Keep talking, says Jon Faine. My suggestion: Listen to Robert Wardell, Edward Smith Hall, Andrew Bent and the other editors who went to jail for libel in the 1820s, for their ghosts may be heard ...

Robert Pullan is writing The Press Gang, a history of capital city journalism.

WHITE NATION by Tony Birch

Entry Notification

come and anchor

vessels of hope

to the line of wire

do not disembark

keep voices still

breath closed - but fall

from southern skies

sun-blessed and warmed

by our generosity

Order by numbers

hope fades for 200

220 or 250 or more

who went to the bottom

on the 24th of, or the 25th of

(or was it the 26th of)

when they slipped away?

a nation survives

this sinking wreck with

emptiness our companion

Another 113

there are 113

800 kms off the coast

to the west of us

113 to the north

113 dropping from the sky

and 113 tunnelling in

21 children, 54 women

and 38 emaciated men

are preparing to attack us

Illegal migrants boom racket

a precious cargo

boxed and trucked

within the bowels

their labour intact

bodies available

for work and your pleasure

the world of the third

catalogued and delivered -

a spare-change gift to the west

SIEV X

we leave an indelible mark

on 353 lives gone down with

suspected illegal entry vessel X

families prepare their prayers

snapshots are washed against

our untainted beaches

and the minister warns

“if *our* resolve weakens

we will drown in the flood”



Tony Birch

The poems on the previous page are from a suite of poems, the full version of which can be viewed (under the title *The News Today*) at the Asia Pacific Writers' Network website: www.apwn.net

Tony Birch is a writer who has published widely in the areas of short fiction, poetry and creative non-fiction. He has also worked as a writer and curator in collaboration with photographers, film-makers and artists, and was the senior curator on the 'Koori Voices' exhibition at Melbourne Museum's Bunjilaka Centre.

His novel, *Framing Fitzroy: Life in a Melbourne suburb*, will be published by Scribe later this year.



