

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Personal Narrative Article

'And Another Thing'

*Daniel Burt*

Wannabe memoir writers, take note. Your tell-all had better contain juicy gossip and tales of an impoverished childhood or Daniel Burt will be leaving it on the shelf.

If I were Peter Costello, I'd be smirking, too. He's got pretty much no responsibility, his mates have yapped endlessly in public about how terrific he is and he was paid by taxpayers to sit on the backbench while he tapped out, then promoted, his memoirs. Can you imagine a casual employee of Hungry Jack's getting away with that? 'Hey! I know I work here but get off my back about grilling patties! I'm in the middle of the anecdote where Stacey drops her phone in the deep-fryer. What's that? You want to know if I'm quitting? Why don't you just shut your hole, keep paying my wages and hang tight until this puppy hits the shelves.'

Compressing your life into a book is a pompous undertaking. Few of us have the conviction required to assume that people will want to curl up in bed and read about our life. And as for being read about when I'm dead? Not likely. People don't even talk about me when I leave the room.

Then again, few of us get to be treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia, presiding over a decade of economic blah blah blah. And this is the point: readers want dirty, juicy gossip, not a dispassionate catalogue of accomplishments—unless that catalogue includes the number of beer cans cracked open on a long-distance flight. Or, for that matter, the number of flight assistants cracked onto on a long-distance flight.

The longer it takes to write a memoir, the more pressure there is for it to be sensational. That's why every autobiography needs these three elements:

A tough early childhood: Mummy gave you presents not hugs? Spent a winter's night in the family car? Throw in anything that gives the impression you overcame personal hardship and weren't just born into privilege. If you were born into privilege, or inherited fame, talk about how you fought off luxury to forge your own future. It will all be a load of crap but we'll forgive you if you name-drop and toss in stories about famous people stopping by to visit Dad.

A health scare: Excellent if you were bedridden as a child. Illness can be difficult to invent, so if disease is thin on the ground, talk about the near misses. Sentences should end with '... the doctor said five millimetres either side, and I'd be dead.' Remember, having a mobile phone accidentally vibrate against your genitals does not count unless cancer is diagnosed. Which brings me to the next element ...

Sex: Omission can stymie sales and hijack the news cycle, so include everyone and everything—the time, place and barometric pressure. If you think nobody saw you, cast your mind back. Remember that blob and rustle from behind the bush? It was Laurie Oakes with his notepad.

Don't forget that anyone you have ever met will flick through the index, looking for their name. But frequency isn't everything and the index is a chance to enact subtle revenge. In Costello's index, look for Howard, John (see, *Slimeball Who Trashed My Life*). Also, be sure to include a benighted high-school teacher who, in an untraceable exchange, asserted you would 'never amount to anything'. Your every success has been propelled by a desire to prove him wrong. Ideally, this teacher will be dead enough that you can destroy his reputation without fear of litigation.

Some people have favourite authors. Not me.

I have favourite ghost writers. Look at the person, whoever he or she is, who wrote Geri Halliwell's memoirs. Any Cambridge graduate with a masters in literature can write like a Cambridge graduate with a masters in literature, but it takes true genius for that same person to reproduce the voice of a Spice Girl.

As with the tomes of many celebrities whose lives are bursting with too many insights, Ginger's memoir spilled into a second volume. There are books that chronicle the global history of the 20th century in fewer pages. No word yet on if Costello's book will be the first in a series but, as Socrates meant to say, the unexamined life is not worth \$54.99 in hardback.

I personally prefer to read unauthorised biographies because they make me feel as if I'm doing something dangerous. They cover events and perspectives that flamboyant tycoons, colourful racing identities and Australian Test cricketers omit from their own stories. Truth comes from the third person; like how only your friends can tell you what you did when you were drunk last night.

After his much talked about silence, the memoirs of the former treasurer were released earlier this month. Complete with fully audited page numbers. Action through his career brought him fame; inaction brought him, if not infamy, then something around infamy's vicinity. I just hope his teachers are dead. And that I somehow score a mention in the second edition—it will make a great yarn for my memoirs.

First published in *Sunday Life* (*The Sunday Age* magazine), 28 September 2008.

## Appendix 2: Personal Narrative Article

'Strangers in the House'

*Henrietta Cook*

For some, the thought of complete strangers in their house is enough to send shivers down the spine. Let alone strangers who sleep, eat, shower and who-knows-what-else in their house.

I'm talking about the mysterious practice of house-swapping—something I recently experienced first hand.

It was a friend of a friend who planted the idea of a house swap. It was also a friend of a friend who recommended the house-swap family. Perhaps that was our first mistake—putting our trust in the hands of strangers.

A series of phone calls and emails between Melbourne and Paris secured the swap and it wasn't long before my mother went into a cleaning frenzy. In the weeks that followed, our house was transformed from what was once a tidy yet lived-in family dwelling into a sparkling white, pristine guesthouse. Taps were polished, doonas aired, paths weeded, windows cleaned and floorboard cracks vacuumed.

We arrived in Paris on a cold winter's morning and took a taxi to our house-swap destination. The city was dark but already there were signs of life. Shop doors swung open, couples walked their dogs and men dressed in green rhythmically swept the streets. I imagined

stepping out of the taxi and into the life of a vibrant Parisian neighbourhood, shrugging off the tourist persona and instantly becoming a local. The taxi gradually came to a stop as we approached the driveway of a grim 1970s block of high-rise flats in the suburb of Telegraph.

I clambered up the stairs, opened the front door and was immediately hit by the stench of dog, mouldy bread and the lingering smell of a recent fire. Visions of a quaint Parisian apartment adorned in beautiful objects and overlooking bustling streets were quickly extinguished. I scoured the rooms for something attractively foreign and picturesque. There were no creaking wooden staircases, no rustic iron balconies, no potted geraniums aligned on the window sill and no freshly baked pastries awaiting us. The turn of a door handle had granted me immediate access into the intimacy of a stranger's life, but it was not a life I had any desire to share.

A cursory glance revealed that the beds were unchanged; the sheets a soiled mess of dirt and dog-hair. Piles of rubbish littered the kitchen floor—decomposed vegetable scraps and two-week-old fast food containers. I was desperate for a shower after the long flight from Melbourne and went looking for a towel but the linen cupboard was bare. The only towels available were a soiled, sodden heap on the bathroom floor. A recent kitchen fire had badly charred the walls of the house and left a path of destruction in its wake. The bathroom was a mycologist's dream, carpeted in a thick layer of green mould. And to make matters worse, the phone had been cut off, the toilet was clogged and the oven unusable. After the long and tiring journey from Melbourne to Paris, this was not the warm, hospitable welcome I had been looking forward to.

My usually reserved mother had been conned into scheduling a radio interview with her radio-producer friend in Melbourne. Apparently a story on the joys of house-swapping was just what listeners of the 2am ABC Radio timeslot wanted to hear. We racked our brains for something positive to say about our first 24 hours in the Telegraph slum. Nothing. Reluctantly, the radio interview was cancelled, my mum explaining, 'If I went to air I'd be sued for defamation. I have nothing nice to say. Nothing nice at all.'

House-swapping is not uncommon. It is a surprisingly alluring concept for many singles, couples and families around the world.

One of the major international house-swap agencies, Homelink Organisation, processes more than 13,500 house-swaps from 69 countries each year. House-swapping is set to become ‘the next big thing’ following the release of *The Holiday*, a movie starring Hollywood A-listers Cameron Diaz, Jude Law, Kate Winslet and Jack Black.

It’s a pity my house-swapping experience bore no resemblance to the glamorous boy-meets-girl storyline depicted in *The Holiday*.

It didn’t bother me that we were staying in a public housing estate on the outskirts of the notoriously rough suburb of Telegraph (named appropriately, so I presumed, after the giant steel telecommunications towers that loomed overhead). To tell you the truth, I couldn’t care less that I was without the basic comforts of a warm bed, a clean shower and a flushing toilet. What annoyed me most was the unfairness of the situation.

We were to spend two weeks in Telegraph but were out after two days. A quick call to Hotel Esmerelda and a guaranteed vacancy set us packing. You’re probably wondering what state our house was in when we arrived home. I’m glad to say that it was intact and relatively clean.

Now I’m able to look back and laugh. It’s become a family joke. We laugh our heads off when we recount our first night in Telegraph—grumpy, tired and desperately trying to keep warm under the comfort of our coats.

I’ve realised that house-swapping is an exercise in trust. And while that trust can be breached, it’s best not to lose faith in human nature. I’m hoping for better luck next time.

First published in *The Age*, 26 January 2007.

## Appendix 3: Personal Narrative Article

‘The Day I Stopped Killing Animals’

*Andy Drewitt*

I shot a duck once.

A couple of mates and I would make a week of it. We'd pack up some gear, a guitar, the Spam, about three firearms per man and drive North into the hills. After we set up camp, we would set about making small animals smaller. We loved going to the bush.

And I shot a duck. I remember, as we were enjoying the crisp morning air, the sideways sunshine, we shot a fox about three or four times. But it didn't drop, so we chased it to some scrub on the upper side of the dam, where we lost it. We sat on the dam wall for a while. We were a bit tired from our jog. The view was beautiful, mist creeping slowly up the valley.

It was Glenn who spotted the duck, paddling from behind some reeds. Had good eyes, Glenn. We all had a bit of a look through our rifle scopes and one or two of us said it seemed a bit small. But we were all a bit frustrated at losing that fox. And Glenn had the knack of marketing. ‘First to hit it doesn't have to wash up for the rest of the weekend.’ Glenn hated washing up. The only noise for the next second was the clunk of our rifle bolts loading to firing position.

It took some doing to make contact with that duck. We only had our .22 rifles—the shotguns were back at camp. And the duck, as soon

as the water started plopping up, did a dive, stayed down for about half a minute and came up again 10 to 15 metres away. We found that amazing, because it was quite a distance, quite a feat. Simon mumbled something about the beauty of God's creation (we all suspected he had been to Sunday school as a kid).

And then I shot the duck.

The guys mumbled 'nice shot', probably thinking about how many dishes I used per meal. And we wandered off to look for another fox, or some rabbits, whatever. On the way back, passing the dam, we heard a noise. We crept up and had a look. It was another duck, the mate of the duck I had just shot. You could tell because it was pacing and crying.

I'd seen it before. When I was growing up, my parents kept poultry, and our geese—of which the wood ducks are closely related—would pair up for life. One of our ganders was taken by a dog and its mate cried for days, pacing, searching, wailing. So when I saw this duck, heard this duck, I told the boys I didn't feel so good.

'I'm going back to camp', I said.

Glenn kept walking towards the dam, toward the noise.

'I'll be back soon', he said.

That evening, I helped with the dishes. I couldn't sit still.

And, after that weekend, I sold my guns.

Writing this piece forced me to think why I got involved in shooting to begin with.

Entertainment. Something to do.

But why did I choose shooting out of all forms of entertainment? Entertainment again. How often in movies and television are we confronted with guns?

It's hard to think of 10 movies that don't have at least one gun. Even *Watership Down* has *one*.

As I was growing up, the whole family would sit in front of the Friday-night western. When John and the boys weren't out in the environment shooting 'pilgrims' or Indians, they were potting wild-life. And then, on Saturday and Sunday nights, there were the war, gangster and action genres. And, during the week, detective dramas. As I was growing up, I suspect I saw more images of destruction than creativity. I wonder if that created some sort of imbalance?

Well, I shot countless numbers of small animals for entertainment.

Speaking of entertainment, I shot a bird recently. An albatross, I think it was. A noble creature. But I shot it with a camera.

A couple of friends and I make weekends of it. We pack up some gear, a guitar, no Spam, about three cameras per man and drive to the Otway Ranges. After we set up camp, we set out capturing the environment creatively with black-and-white film. We love going to the bush.

First published in *The Age*, 17 May 1999.

## Appendix 4: Personal Narrative Article

'Going Home'

*Corey Hague*

I sat down rather despondently and looked at my watch.

I'd gotten mixed up and accidentally hopped on the wrong train, and now had a tedious, and—though there was no one around to laugh—embarrassing wait until the next one.

To further confound things, it was drawing close to midnight when the trains would stop running altogether. To be fair on myself, I was new to all this, catching trams in a new town. Town? It was most certainly a city.

Everywhere I looked there was something to remind me I was somewhere I didn't know, and sitting on that cold, empty, suburban train station platform, I began to have the same nagging thought I'd had since I moved: was I doing the right thing?

Moving to a city without really knowing why (or even how) I was doing it. But I had, and now I knew what train not to get on, if nothing else.

I had eight cigarettes left in my packet and \$13 in my bank account to buy the necessities for the next week.

This was nothing new and not the worst thing in the world. I have some no-name cereal (that's an oxymoron, isn't it?) and frozen

meat at home. At least it says that it's meat on the box, but whether or not it's strictly worthy of that title is another matter.

Plus, I'd discovered an Asian market a few blocks from my new place where food is quite cheap, not to mention adventurous. I'd had a few nasty surprises in the form of tastes that should never have been created, a result of appealing-looking packaging with lovely colours and illustrations but unreadable titles. I've learnt to stick with the noodles and to steer well clear of anything with a picture of a fish on it, so I knew I wouldn't starve if I did in fact ever make it home.

I lit one of my eight cigarettes and watched longingly as a train that was futile to me pulled to a noisy halt and ejaculated its eclectic array of passengers into the falsely lit evening.

Every conceivable type of person plus a few unconceivables piled out and looked sideways at me, as though I was a snake coiled waiting for prey in the form of wallets and purses.

I resisted the urge to yell at them that, rather than being an unsavoury thug, I was merely an idiot out of his depth in an unforgiving metropolis and would sooner help than harm; but I envisioned this group of strangers laughing at me and asking how I could help them when I can't even read a train timetable properly.

Besides, I've known for a while now that people's minds are impossible to change, and I already have enough challenges in my life. Beliefs are all people have, so they cling to them for grim life, despite how feeble it may be in reality.

So I just sat, smoking my ever-decreasing cigarette and wishing that I had a book with me. That way I'd be lost here and in words. I was reading Hemingway, trying to figure out why he did it. I doubted it gave answers within the pages, but perhaps I'd be the first ever to read between the lines. Maybe not though, I'm not that gifted.

All the passengers from the last train had left the station (after all, they got on the right one) except for an old fellow with a bicycle and even more unruly facial hair than myself.

He was quite tall, walking along with his rickety steed, held together with love and rust. When I saw his squinty dark eyes glowering towards me I knew he was coming to speak to me. I wasn't fearful despite the situation's possibilities and I had nothing to lose except seven cigarettes to this strange old man. When he was standing

close to me he asked me for a cigarette in an accent I couldn't place. His wrinkled face alluded to not only a long life but also quite a hard one and I thought it petty to begrudge him a simple cigarette when I had a few, certainly more than he.

I was thinking about quitting anyway. I handed him one along with a box of matches (further proof of my financial status) and he asked me what I was doing.

'Just waiting for the damn train home. I got on the wrong one by mistake. I'm pretty new to all this stuff. What have you been up this evening?'

'Ahhh, I've been at a friend of my friend's party. I did not know anyone there and the ladies did not seem to like me so much', he said in his colourful way of talking.

'I know what that can be like. I would've thought a handsome young lad such as yourself would have no worries in convincing the ladies of your worth?'

He laughed deeply at this and I felt better.

'At home the ladies did like me, but here my luck is not so great with the girls', he told me with a chuckle, and apart from being curious as to where home was, I was also pleased at the youthful use of the word 'girls' when he was probably the better part of 70.

'Where was home?' I asked him, pretty sure that he wouldn't be offended by the question.

'I was born in Romania and lived there until I was 18. My family and I had to leave because of the war. We had two days to decide where we wanted to go, Canada or Australia.

'We'd been on a holiday to Austria once, so we decided on Australia because it sounded the same. I was a fit young man but the girls here didn't like me so much. In Romania the girls my age were working girls so we always had fun.

'I was a handsome young man but the girls here were different. But those girls at home, we had fun, and they made a good living as well', he told me in the accent I now knew to be diluted Romanian. He clearly enjoyed reminiscing, even though times would have been tough, much tougher than being stranded on a train platform at night. I couldn't even comprehend choosing which foreign country to leave home for, in two days no less. I pictured him as a young man looking for the things he liked to do in a new country, everyone

speaking a language he had no idea about. I took my feeling of helplessness and multiplied it by about a thousand, and I knew I still wasn't close.

Yet here the man was, decades later, going to parties and enjoying the 'free beers' with only his bicycle and strangers to tell.

We'd finished our cigarettes and he continued talking, mostly about the girls back home and how they told him he was very handsome, even though the girls here didn't seem to agree, when I heard my train coming near.

'Well, here's my train. I'd better grab it otherwise I'll never get home. Take care of yourself and don't let those girls get to you. We all struggle with girls, that's what they're for.'

He laughed his laugh, the same one he would've years ago, when he was younger and enjoying himself in places known here as brothels, just being himself. I handed him two more cigarettes, 'for the road', and walked through the sliding doors into my homebound train. I sat down and thought about that, home, and how it always seems in a state of change.

How it's really wherever you end up, and no matter where you are you'll be yourself. I'm still not sure whether or not I'm doing the right thing by living here, but I'll keep being me, and perhaps when I'm his age I'll know.

First published in the *Progress Press*, 8 January 2001 (Boroondara short story competition winner).

## **Appendix 5: Letter to the Editor**

*Michael Long*

How do I tell my mother that Mr Howard said the stolen generation never took place? How does he explain to me why none of my grandparents are alive?

How do I explain to my mother, who was the most loved, trusting mother figure to all who knew her that Mr Howard is just the same as the people who were in power back then, cold-hearted pricks.

How do I tell my mother that her grandchildren were never affected by the stolen generation, that they don't know their aunties and uncles, their people?

Does Mr Howard understand how much trauma my grandmother suffered. It ripped her heart out, what she went through. Even when she died, her baby was never returned home.

If you put yourself in their shoes—I have three children—and people come knocking at my door, grabbing my children, putting them in the back of a truck, yelling, screaming. Over my dead body, Mr Howard.

Back then my mother had no choice but to go. It was wrong, it did happen. It was Government policy.

My mother was taken when she was a baby, taken to Darwin and put on a boat—she had never seen the sea before—screaming and yelling, not knowing what was happening and then crying herself to

sleep. I call that trauma and abuse. I am so angry anyone could do this to a child just because their skin was a different colour.

Mr Howard, I can't tell my mother because she has been dead for 17 years. Who is going to tell her story, the trauma and lies associated with her people and their families? Mr Howard, if you just walked in their shoes you would understand.

I am all for reconciliation, Mr Howard. I am part of the stolen generation. It's like dropping a rock in a pool of water and it has a rippling effect, so don't tell me it affects only 10 per cent. No amount of money can replace what your Government has done to my family.

Michael Long  
Essendon Football Club

First published in *The Age*, 5 April 2000.

## Appendix 6: Tribute Essay

‘The World of Soap Operas’

*Winnie Salamon*

*The grandiloquent truth of gesture is one of life's great occasions.*

Charles Baudelaire

*Carpe diem. That's my motto. It means seize the day.*

Clarke Garrison, *The Bold and the Beautiful*

The virtue of television soap operas is that they bring people together. In fact, the kind of social cohesiveness they provide has probably not been experienced since pre-industrial village life. Soaps also enhance communication within families. Take, for example, grandparents.

It's often hard for kids to communicate with their grandparents. Sometimes it was hard for me. After all, what does an eight-year-old *Wham* fan have to say to their sixty-something Austrian grandmother whose favourite past-times include doing find-a-word puzzles, cooking, and shopping at K-Mart? In that order. But there was one thing we had in common. *Days of Our Lives*.

Oma was a secret soap-fan and I was an out-of-the-closet *Days* aficionado. When I was away sick from school I'd lie on Oma's black

Franco-Cozzo style couch and we'd watch *Days*. Every now and then Oma would yell, 'Rabbish!' But afterwards we'd spend hours discussing what had just happened and what we anticipated would happen. We discussed the characters like they were our friends.

Later on, when teen angst meant that I wouldn't be caught dead with my family in public, I wouldn't be without them during the soaps. My brother and I would watch *Degrassi Junior High*, then Mum and Dad would join us for *East Enders*, and afterwards leave us to watch *Home and Away*.

We'd yell at the screen, cringe during the embarrassing moments and constantly criticise the actors' looks. We loved it when our real-life childhood friend played a dubious punk rebel on *Home and Away*: that an ordinary person could infiltrate the elusive world of soap operas seemed to us irrefutable proof that there was not only a god but also a heaven (preferably one where soaps screened 24/7).

But soaps don't only bring family members together. In the inner-suburbs of Melbourne and other big cities, where most people walk around and ignore each other, I've had country-town like bonding experiences with complete strangers, all because of a mutual love of, say, *B&B*.

Just the other day I was waiting in the queue at K-Mart, flicking through *TV Soap* magazine. I turned to my boyfriend and said, 'I can't believe Brooke and Ridge might get back together.' My boyfriend, who unfortunately doesn't share my love of the soap opera genre, merely grunted, but the young guy behind the checkout perked up.

'Do you watch *Bold and the Beautiful*?' he asked.

When I said yes the checkout guy said, 'It's my favourite show.'

It's unlikely that this eighteen year old and I had much in common in real-life. But it didn't matter because we talked like old friends about recent plot developments, and favourite characters, and how we've never forgotten the heart-wrenching death of beautiful-saint-like-Becky to cancer.

And it's not as though we stand around discussing brilliant scripts and hidden meanings and great acting and fabulous direction. I think you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone involved in the day-time soap industry who claims the shows to be fabulous, ground breaking art.

That's not why annoyingly ironic 20-somethings love soaps or why middle-aged housewives or aged pensioners get a kick out of

shows like *B&B*. It's not as though we don't notice the dim lighting or the sometimes dubious acting or the inconsistent plot lines. Of course it was dodgy that Macy died in a car crash and came back as a ghost but then turned out to be perfectly healthy and hiding out in Italy for a couple of years.

But to us, these things don't matter. What matters is the fun you have discussing the show with fellow fans, or the way you can just sit there for half an hour and become engrossed in the ridiculous lives of rich and glamorous and surgically enhanced people who have nothing to do with you. It's gossip without the guilt and messy ramifications. It's like the pleasure of being engrossed in a trashy novel that isn't going to end for years and years and years.

As soap opera aficionados we want the image of passion and anger and happiness and despair, but we don't want these emotions presented in their real-life complexity. We don't want to spend years watching Macy's family grieve over her death in a quiet, poignant and realistic way. We want the kind of grief that makes women faint and men throw large, heavy objects. We crave the loud, embarrassing tears that somehow don't make mascara run; we love and cheesy dialogue like, 'That is what love is, melting ourselves together ...'

It's not social commentary we're after (although that has occasionally been known to seep in). We don't want satire or parody or realism. What we want is sheer spectacle, an exaggerated version of reality.

When Brooke gave birth to her daughter's husband's child we were appalled; when Amber kicked her addiction to prescription drugs we were proud; when Taylor died at the hands of the crazy and merciless Sheila we were traumatised. Our emotional responses to soaps are simple and pure, much easier to understand than any we might experience in real-life. With soaps we're quick to judge and we're quick to change our minds. One week we hate Amber, the next we love her. Our emotions and those of the characters are black-and-white intelligible.

Soap operas entertain us, they give us something to talk about when we meet people with whom we'd otherwise have nothing in common, and they present life in a way that is both unrealistically simple and absurdly complicated. With their chiselled jaws, large

breasts and wrinkle-free faces, the characters in soap-land give us a world in which Good and Evil are easily distinguishable; a reality we can laugh at and cry with; and a microcosm we can completely comprehend.

## Appendix 7: Magazine Feature Article

‘What Are Your Neighbours Up To?’

*Winnie Salamon*

### **Desmond—‘Man of God’**

‘I didn’t used to be like this’, says Desmond Hynes, Australia’s most famous ‘man of God’ who lives in a predominately Jewish suburb in Melbourne and decorates his front yard with ‘praise Jesus’ signs. ‘There was a time when I was drinking, smoking and fornicating. When I turned 50 I got very sick and prayed to God, he gave me the strength to turn my life around.’

Desmond hasn’t touched a drink for the past 14 years and prefers to spend his time preaching in the streets and painting Jesus propoganda.

‘I buy everything from the op-shop and decorate it. I like to spread the word in any way I can. I look out for anything that’s unusual and has an impact. I don’t go to Church, most organised religion is just about making money.

‘My neighbours don’t say much, they have never complained. I was quite good friends with the people on the left but they moved away recently. I haven’t had a chance to meet my new neighbours yet. A lot of people go and visit the historic mansion across the road. Then, when they come out they’ll come over and take a picture of my front

yard. Some people are very nice, but others can be quite abusive. Sometimes they say I'm crazy. I say, 'Yes, I'm crazy. I'm crazy for Jesus.'

With all its signs, Desmond's front yard might stop traffic, but the inside of his house is like a bizarre kitsch art gallery with an entire room devoted to the shopping buggies Desmond decorates with Jesus signs. He has piles of t-shirts painted with slogans including a Bart Simpson one that says, 'Don't abuse Jesus, man.'

'I love the Lord and I love people so I think it's worth all the abuse—I have never been bashed, God protects me. I don't have many friends because lots of people think I'm mad and don't understand me. My best friend is my pen pal. He's on death row in America and read about me in a magazine. I have lived in this house for 30 years and whenever the landlady comes over she ignores all my decorations. She never says a word about it.'

Never been married, Desmond lives with his younger sister Shirley who says she's proud of her brother. 'I love what he does, but I don't feel I'm pure enough to go out preaching with him. Sometimes I have a bit of a drink and I know I shouldn't do that. I'd feel like a hypocrite if I did Desmond's work.'

Desmond shakes his head. 'I don't believe anybody is pure, but I am determined to make more people go to heaven and do good. I don't care if people call me a moron or an imbecile. Jesus is the wind beneath my wings.'

## **Suburban Gothic**

Six years ago David, a data installation technician, was stuck in an unhappy marriage, had low self-esteem and little sense of self. Then he turned thirty, grew his hair, separated from his wife and made his first Gothic-style costume.

'When I got divorced I felt like I could do what I wanted. I've always liked horror and Gothic films and even cartoons like Scooby Doo and Batman, but I never had the opportunity to explore those interests. One day I went to a costume ball and got all this attention because of the costume I wore. It was an incredible feeling and it encouraged me to consider making my own costumes. I'd spent a large part of my marriage alone and was very shy.'

Since the costume ball David's made around 8 or 9 costumes including 'Lord Necro', an absolutely amazing suit of scale-like armor

made of ordinary spoons. He's also made a pair of homemade boots that look like goat's hooves and a handmade, lined, purple leather coat.

'Lord Necro is my favourite, it took around 2 years off and on to make and weighs 47kg. I guess I've spent the last five years remodeling myself. I've got piercings and tattoos and can get quite obsessive about costume making. While I'm creating something I feel good about myself and when it's over I'm not quite sure what to do.'

David isn't the only one undergoing a transformation. His recently purchased home in leafy suburban Melbourne is becoming his Gothic fantasy house with multi-coloured walls and costumes displayed throughout. He lives with his eight-year-old son who also loves dressing up in costume and enjoys showing off his outfits on fancy dress days at school.

'I'm going to introduce myself to the neighbours slowly, there are lots of grey-haired ladies around here', David laughs. 'Some of my friends and family thought it was a bit strange when I started costuming. My Dad often looks at them and shakes his head, but my mother, a dressmaker, loves it. Even my work mates are supportive and I've been doing volunteer work for the Carlton Football club since I was a kid. They've been great, though it did take a little while for them to get used to it. I even went to the Grand Final party dressed as a vampire.' Miranda, his girlfriend, is a professional freelance costume maker herself.

'I wouldn't wear a costume out in public unless it was for a special occasion like a party and I don't walk around the house dressed up for no reason. I wouldn't say my personality changes depending on the particular costume and in some ways I still feel self-conscious when I'm in costume. At the same time it's empowering and I feel much more confident. I feel like I'm finally understanding and enjoying who I am.'

## **Reptile Keepers**

From the outside it looks like your typical house in country suburbia. You can smell the sea air and the front door is often left open. Inside it's just as ordinary. Sure, there's a pair of rainbow lorikeets that sit on your shoulder and fly around freely, and there do tend to be a few

more snakes than usual featured in the family snaps hanging on the kitchen wall. But you'd still never guess what's out back.

Mip and Mick Pugh have been in love with reptiles most of their lives. Nowadays they have over 400 lizards, snakes, tortoises, geckos—you name it—living in their average-sized back yard. They have snakes eggs incubating in heated containers and mice and guinea pigs breeding for food supplies. Over 40 species of snake live in one shed alone and glass and wire cages, bathtubs cover most of the front lawn. It's not exactly a shocking snake pit, more like the reptile section of a zoo.

'We started this collection about 12 years ago', Mip says. 'We had an even bigger collection before that, but there's a lot of red tape that goes with keeping reptiles and because we didn't fully understand the licensing laws they were taken from us.'

The Pugh's two grown sons haven't exactly adopted their parent's love of reptiles, but the popularity of lizards and snakes has definitely increased and reptile theft is now quite common. 'Occasionally we get the odd lizard escape and when that happens, the neighbours keep an eye out for it, they're pretty good. We've never had anyone complain about living next door to a shed full of snakes! They know we're responsible and would never let a snake get out. In the past people were taught to fear reptiles, but they're becoming more educated now. They're even quite fashionable.

'It's getting so I hardly ever have a minute to myself', Mip continues while Mick points out Lady, his favourite snake. 'I'm up until 2 every morning finishing off all the work I've got to do. As well as caring for the animals themselves, there's a lot of bookkeeping that needs to be done and we run a website ([www.rosh.com.au/vaah](http://www.rosh.com.au/vaah)). I think I'd like to quit in a few years and travel around Australia, but I want to get a few more species first. When we do leave we'll have to sell and give away everything which won't be too difficult considering how popular reptiles are nowadays.'

Mip and Mick name most of their reptiles and seem to be able to tell them apart without any trouble. They've bought hundreds of reptiles and native animals back from the brink of death and could spend hours telling sad and passionate stories about animals they thought would never make it through the night living to a ripe old age.

'Some people say we're crazy,' Mip laughs. 'It's expensive and time consuming but I love animals. It's a fascinating hobby.'

## **The Toy Man**

Constructing a six foot dragon out of foam is not an unusual past time for Jason, a 25-year-old computer programmer. He lives in an immaculately tidy brick veneer on the outskirts of suburban Melbourne and his small bedroom is overflowing with home-made Disney-like animal costumes and stuffed toys.

With his Tigger backpack hanging on the bed and favourite stuffed goat on the floor, Jason's bedroom should look like it belongs to someone at least 15 years younger. But it doesn't. No child would have adult-sized cartoonish wolf and fox costumes lying around and size 11 boots by the bed.

'I made JAWolf, my first animal costume, four years ago. I'd been thinking about making one for ages and finally took the plunge. I loved the process of designing and making a costume, it was almost liberating. I love animals, especially wolves and think a creature that's half human, half animal is really sexy. When I'm in costume I feel more free and confident.'

So far Jason's made two full body animal, or 'furry', costumes, a wolf and a fox that look like better-made versions of the ones you see people wearing in shopping centers. He's also dressed as a kinky cat in a studded bondage-style collar and runs a personal web site dedicated to the three characters he's created.

'I still live with my parents so they've always known how much I love making and dressing up in costume. In fact, my mother is a seamstress and sometimes she helps me with the sewing and gives me advice. My brother is accepting, although he thinks it's pretty weird.' Jason says. 'I'm open about who I am and all my friends and most of my work mates know about my furry side. I have never had a girlfriend who hasn't known about it before we got together so the people I do have relationships with are usually pretty comfortable with it. The best relationship I've ever had was with a girl I met through a furry group. Many girls do lose interest when they find out, but in the end it's their loss.'

Most of the time Jason wears his costume to fancy dress parties and at home. He occasionally ventures out in public dressed as his

favourite character, JAWolf and admits to loving the attention he receives. 'One of the funniest experiences was having coffee in a busy café dressed in costume. It felt great.'

'My fantasy is to have an entire house that I can fill with as much furry stuff as I like. I won't just be limited to my bedroom and study, it would be a kind of furry kingdom.'

First published in *Marie Claire* in May 2001.

## Appendix 8: Travel Article

Morocco: as Seen (Not) on TV

*Tori Cavanagh*

'Pardonnez-moi, you want me to take them off?'

'Oui oui, clothes off. Je t'aide. Leave undies on if you want.'

It's not everyday I find myself being told to expose my stark white flesh to a room full of Moroccan strangers. As I was undressing and attempting to cover my chest simultaneously, I had *that* talk with myself; *c'mon, it's all part of the experience, just copy the others and act like this is a normal bath for you.*

But it really wasn't normal for me, which is why I enjoyed being in a Moroccan *hammam* so much. This sauna-bathing-cleansing experience opened my eyes to real Moroccan life; the one underneath the djellabas and veils, and the one tourists seldom see.

Had it not been for Houssaine, I too would have been one of those tourists. The vivid colours of the clothing, the intoxicating smell of spices at the markets and organised chaos of the cities would have shielded me from seeing the local side of Morocco. I would have brought home artefacts and stories from the foreign land, yet seen the country through the lens of a camera rather than the eyes of a Moroccan. Befriending Houssaine unwrapped a completely different

side of this evocative country; one that is open to foreigners, but only those who are prepared to step outside their comfort zones.

Too often we travel to new countries but inoculate ourselves against truly experiencing the new culture. After a day of sightseeing, we return to a hotel room, switch on the television for a dose of CNN, and have dinner at a Westernised 'local' restaurant. Sure creature comforts are important to some, but if you want to unburden yourself of them, Morocco is a great place to experiment.

Firstly, stay in riads rather than hotels. These old and quintessentially Moroccan mansions have become guesthouses and celebrate their individuality. They vary in price and condition yet all offer a relaxed and cosy stay—a retreat to enjoy your mint tea without the hustle and bustle of the city outside. If you're interested in heading to the Sahara desert, why not spend a night in a tent and wake up at 4.30 a.m. for a camel ride? You'll meet other tourists as they come for the ride in bus loads from nearby hotels, and you'll captivate them recounting your experience of sleeping in a nomad tent in the Sahara.

These adventures are there to be had, but they are off the beaten track and can't be found in a Lonely Planet book. Of course still go to the well-known bizzarres and souks, but take a local in hand rather than a guidebook. The Moroccan people are open and extremely responsive to a smile and a bonjour, which is the best way to make friends there. I was lucky enough to be invited to a friend of Houssaine's house and share the Ramadan 'breakfast' at sunset with his family. Though most of them could speak neither French nor English, we communicated through the universal language of body gestures, laughing and lots of 'yummmm' when I tried the exotic new flavours in front of me. Most agree home-cooked food is the best, and the home-cooked smorgasbord of Moroccan seafood, soups, couscous and pastries were no exception.

Few travellers would agree that if you're looking for a relaxing and spiritual awakening, you should head to the heart of bustling and ancient Fes. But that's where I found my *hammam*; in a local street and on an insignificant Tuesday night. That experience though, turned out to be one of the most significant, and I could have only found out about it from my local friend Houssaine.

Sure I went to the other major cities and tourist sites in Morocco, but that was mostly to tick the boxes that I had been there. Getting off the tourist track offered a wealth of experience and unforeseen adventures, but only because I was prepared to take that first step. Though this may not be ideal for all, if you are willing to experiment outside your comfort zone, a new world will unfold in front of you.

A shorter version of this was published in the Melbourne *Herald Sun*, 17 February 2008.

## Appendix 9: Travel Article

'Candle Power'

*Alyssa French*

### **First Draft**

The ethereal chant of a Greek priest pierces the balmy air on Good Friday eve. His rich voice resonates against the white washed walls of Athens's deserted streets. There is not a soul to be seen. The streets are mysteriously emptied of the daily throb of American tourists, Greek families, and peddlers, who are eager to draw your attention to a 'good *Tabepna*. Just a little walk from here ... *kafenio*, wine, good price ...' Athens grinds to a halt on Easter Friday as churches beckon believers to evening prayer. I arrive in Athens on such an evening. Still fazed by my experience of the lax Greek customs, I clamber the southern slope of the Acropolis to view the Good Friday procession. A few tourists have the same idea. Many of them bring with them a measure of Greek spirit: a bottle of the licorice flavoured and potent national drink: ouzo.

Athens looks like any other city from the top of the hill. Hundreds of lights glisten like a receding tide across the cityscape. There is something special about looking down on Athens from the floodlit marble gleam of the Acropolis. The Pathenon forms the crowning centerpiece of Athens, much as it did as part of the ancient

Pericles' city hundreds of years ago. However today, the Pathenon is the faded remnants of a golden age, once marked by colossal buildings and gold plated statues.

Now smog chokes the capital's high rise buildings, yet I can still see the ancient candle-lit procession up Lykavittos Hill. From my perch, the shrouded brier appears engulfed with flames as it progresses up the hill to the Chapel of Agios Georgos. The torchbearers' silk robes and gold headrests capture the final rays of the setting sun. Easter festivities in Greece are a refreshing change to the consumer-driven frenzy of Western countries. The spiritual flame still burns brightly in the Orthodox Christian calendar.

Resurrection mass begins at 11 p.m. on Saturday night. The streets fill with worshipers, who desperately cup the flames of their flickering candles. The ceremony of the lighting candles is the most significant moment in the orthodox year, as it symbolises Christ's resurrection.

Lent ends with a bang at midnight as the city's streets erupt with a concoction of homemade firecrackers. Gleeful children squeal after each explosion and beckon to their friends to take part in the commotion. Seemingly oblivious to the racket, their parents and relatives dance in wide circles further down the street.

An old man with a toothless grin spots me as unwitting outsider and seizes me by the hand. He twists me around and promptly pinches me on the bottom with a rich chortle. It seems that the typical male charm that Australians' associate with Greeks is never long abandoned during religious festivities.

The splutter-splatter of a rotating spit and the distinct smell of roast lamb heralds Easter Sunday morning. Athenians are enjoying an outdoor feast. The streets are alive with the buzz of children's laughter, men's jovial banter, and the rising voices of women eager to be heard over the top of one another. Only the dogs under the table are remain quiet, as they devour the discarded bones and unwanted tidbits tossed to them.

As lamb is not my favourite food, I follow my nose to the closest bakery. I gawk at the windows, which are filled with red-dyed Easter eggs embedded in twists of sweet bread and sticky custard pastry. Like a little child in a lolly shop, I sample all the pastries, each sweeter and more indulgent than the next. The crisp pastry of Katafii melts with a sweet explosion of honey and nuts. Katafii from my favourite

Carlton cafe is simply an inferior replica of the mouth-watering original.

As the afternoon progresses, the Greek voices rise in proportion to their owners' merriment. Retsina, an aromatic red wine, flows freely as a fruity accompaniment to the meal of roast lamb. I consume Retsina to my limited capacity and carefully slip away from the raucous festivities.

My next stop is the local tourist shop, *The Faithful Greek*, where I purchase a Greek recipe book, which I check has my favourite pastry recipe. I will treasure the book on my return as a memento of my true Easter experience in Athens.

### **Published Version**

The chant of a priest pierces the air on Good Friday eve. Athens is grinding to a halt as churches beckon believers to evening prayer. I clamber up the southern slope of the Acropolis to view a procession. A few other tourists have the same idea and bring a bottle of the potent national drink, the licorice-flavoured ouzo.

I can see the candle-lit procession up Lykavittos Hill to the Chapel of Agios Giorgios. The torch-bearers' silk robes and golden head-dresses reflect the rays of the setting sun.

Easter in Greece is celebrated a week later than the non-Orthodox commemoration and is a refreshing change from the consumer-driven frenzy of many Western countries.

The spiritual flame burns brightly in the Orthodox Christian calendar. Resurrection Mass begins at 11 p.m. on Saturday. The streets fill with worshippers, who cup their flickering candles in their hands. Lighting candles is the most significant moment in the Orthodox year because it symbolises Christ's resurrection.

Lent ends with a bang at midnight when the streets erupt with home-made firecrackers. Children squeal after each explosion and beckon their friends to take part in the commotion. Seemingly oblivious to the racket, parents and relatives dance in wide circles farther down the street.

An old man with a toothless grin chortles as he grabs me by the hand, twists me around and pinches my bottom.

The spatter of a rotating spit and the smell of roast lamb herald Easter Sunday morning. Athenians are enjoying an outdoor feast.

The streets are alive with children's laughter, men's banter and the rising voices of women trying to be heard over one another. Only dogs are quiet as they eat the bones and titbits tossed to them.

I follow my nose to a bakery with windows filled with red-dyed Easter eggs embedded in twists of sweet bread and sticky custard pastry. I sample the pastries, each sweeter and more indulgent than the next. The crisp pastry of Katafii melts with an explosion of honey and nuts.

As the afternoon progresses, voices rise in proportion to their owner's merriment. Retsina, an aromatic wine, flows freely as a fruity accompaniment to the meal of roast lamb.

My next stop is a tourist shop, The Faithful Greek, where I buy a book with my favourite pastry recipes. It's a book I will treasure as a memento of my great Easter experience in Athens.

First published in the *Herald Sun*, 2 March 2003.

## Appendix 10: Op-ed Article

'Hey, Pollies, You're in My Space. Get Out!'

*Brendan Lawley*

'You got one pimped out page K Rudd,' says 'Woody' in a comment posted on Kevin Rudd's Myspace website. Continuing the trend started by the American Democrats' policy launch on YouTube this year, the Australian election has shaped up into a digital affair. And as one of the teenagers targeted by these campaigns, I'm embarrassed.

Lindsay McDougall, aka 'The Doctor', from radio station Triple J sums it up best from a youth perspective. 'Seeing John Howard on YouTube is like having your dad add you as a friend on Myspace,' he says. 'It just feels wrong.'

Rudd and Howard are both guilty of dumbing-down political debate in the way they are using the internet. Pithy YouTube statements and glittering websites divert debate and benefit no one but the media, who lap it up because it is entertaining. But if entertainment comes at the cost of real discussion, then we could be in trouble.

I don't object to the increased use of the internet in political campaigns. It was inevitable—although I'm sure it irritates those people who see the internet as entertainment, or as a great escape from the barrage of politics provided by other media forms.

Ultimately, though, I'm sure we can all see the immense opportunities for exposure provided by the internet. I don't believe anyone would expect our politicians not to exploit this resource. But if we look a little more closely at some of the techniques being used, we will all feel that familiar twinge of cringe coming on.

Howard uploaded his first video announcement on YouTube early in September. He has since barraged the site with many more, presenting his policies in short clips on issues such as climate change and Aboriginal rights, all the way to terrorism and the Tasmanian hospital system. His second announcement outlined a plan for an army gap-year program for school leavers, clearly identifying the target audience for the use of this technology as young adults.

Perhaps it is a sign of the absurdity of Howard's youth mobilisation campaign that a search on 'Prime Minister John Howard' returns more parodies on the announcements than the announcements themselves. Various forms of animations, cartoons, puppet shows and many overdubbed versions of the speeches pop up.

Internet users are clearly not taking Howard's campaign seriously.

While the Prime Minister's addresses to the masses on YouTube never stood a chance of roping in youths, Kevin Rudd has had more success with his internet campaign. Rudd has used popular social networking websites myspace and Facebook to great effect, gaining thousands of 'friends' who voice their support for him by posting comments.

Rudd's bright T-shirts have become cult collectables to uber-cool fashionistas and the favourite items of clothing for K-Rudd's 'fans'. Thousands have signed up to receive 'Kmail' and have downloaded the computer and mobile phone logo wallpapers. Since then Rudd has received rock-star-like receptions in schools across Australia.

Australian youths have fallen for Kevin Rudd, the product. A comment left by 'Zac' on the myspace page exemplifies Rudd's success: 'dude, u r a bloody champion, if i was old enough i would dead set vote for u!' These words reveal the biggest problem for Rudd, as well. The people responding to Rudd's campaign cannot actually help decide the outcome of the election.

Another casualty in this media mobilisation war is public debate.

Ideally, the internet provides many avenues for the public to engage in national policy. This potential has not been realised in Australian politics. The comment boxes on Kevin Rudd's myspace require authentication from the Labor media office. This means that nothing disparaging slips through. Although this is probably justified by the possibilities for inappropriate content to be posted, there remains no provision for genuine public engagement with the parties through the internet.

Worse yet, the clutter of new-media political products threatens to overshadow important political debate.

In the aftermath of the nation's shock horror at Kevin Rudd's visit to a 'partial nudity' strip club, a Melbourne men's club, Goldfingers, befriended Rudd on myspace. Rudd's website managers accepted the offer, as they probably do most requests. A media maelstrom soon broke out and conservative parents groups were out in force offering their damnation. Rudd was suddenly irresponsible and unaccountable. The Goldfingers myspace was soon suspended.

Meanwhile, another day passes and the federal election draws closer. Another day wasted on triviality rather than policy.

First published in *The Age*, 12 November 2007.

## Appendix 11: Book Review

*Selected Poems* by Les Murray

*Reviewed by Gus Goswell*

One of the most revered, most hated, most praised and most criticised figures in Australian literature, Les Murray is Australia's best-known living poet. He has been awarded the Mondello prize, T.S. Eliot Prize, Queen's Gold Medal for poetry and many other local and international honours. In 1999 he helped then Prime Minister John Howard draft a preamble to the Australian Constitution. He has been officially designated a Living National Treasure and his name is often accompanied by the appellation 'Australia's national poet'.

But who is the real Les Murray? Warrior for the Christian deity and for the forces of Australian neo-liberalism? Poet-Seer of the Australian rural landscape? Faithful and empathetic chronicler of our changing nation? Reactionary critic and propagandist? Murray himself is clearly conscious of the mythic proportion of his reputations. He writes in his contributor note to the John Tranter edited *Best Australian Poetry 2007* that: 'Les Murray was invented in the late 1960s as a bogeyman to frighten Aust. Lit. students. Being of only tenuous reality, he found it easy to ascend into space and study the patterns of human lighting on the planet below.'

Promoted by his current publisher Black Inc. as an ideal introduction to Murray's work, this latest *Selected* contains poems from all

of Murray's published collections except for his two verse novels. As a reader who, although aware of Murray's many reputations and familiar with some of his more recent work, hasn't made a systematic study of his writing, I found in this volume my first opportunity to experience the breadth of his output and test the validity of the Murray myths.

Murray's reputation as a rural poet asserts itself from the opening pieces. 'Driving through Sawmill Town' and 'Driving to the Adelaide Festival 1976 via the Murray Valley Highway' and the ten pages consumed by 'The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle' are noteworthy early poems. While many of these poems are clearly the work of an outsider (as the driving motif suggests), in other poems Murray positions himself as an intimate within the landscapes and the lives of the characters he records. These poems are full of gum trees, barbeque smoke, billabongs 'pregnant with swirls' and other images of an Australia and its inhabitants that exist more as myth than reality for many Australians. Yet Murray is certainly a poet with the ability to throw a visual image onto the mind of his reader. In 'The Hypogeum', for example, he gives us 'a black lake glimmering among piers, electric lighted,/windless, of no depth' and the 'rare shafts of daylight' that 'waver at their base.'

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Murray has attempted to capture the particular rhythm of the Australian vernacular in these poems, although his conception of Australian-ness in speech, like many of aspects of his work, has been criticised over the years. A poem such as 'The New Hieroglyphics' gives further insight into Murray's fascination with our diction and its delivery. Australian animals are also a fascination of Murray's. Particularly noteworthy is the series of poems from his 1992 release *Translations from the Natural World* that are written from the point of view of the animal. 'The Cows on Killing Day', for example, is a disturbing account of slaughter from the perspective of another member of the species:

Me in the peed yard. A stick goes out from the human  
and cracks, like the whip. Me shivers and falls down  
with the terrible, the blood of me, coming out behind  
an ear.

Me, that other me, down and dreaming in the bare yard.

Here Murray's ability to find a poem and a perspective in his observance of daily life is on display, as is his love of stories. Many of his poems are really verse tales of rural and city life. A recurring element within is the poet's family history, with voyages to Australia mapped out and a mother figure emerging as a key motif. Religion, and the poet's relationship with God, is another theme that spans decades of output. This *Selected*, like many of his other books, is dedicated 'To the glory of God'. In 'You Find You Can Leave It All' he piously asks, 'God, at the end of prose, /somehow be our poem'. The tone is altered, but no less earnest, in 'The Last Hellos':

Snobs mind us off religion  
nowadays, if they can.  
Fuck them. I wish you God.

A short piece attacks 'Higamous hogamus/Western intellectuals' and makes observations regarding poetics, as well as politics. Murray's close association with the journal *Quadrant* seems to suggest something about his personal politics, but in this collection the poems tend to advocate a general disdain for political dogma, although collective action is also lambasted in 'Demo'. While often insightful, there is a didactic element to many of these poems which limits their success as music, as pure image. In the best of Murray's poems, image and emotion are inseparable. In others, the image contorts within the screw-press of the poet's opinion while emotion hardens into conviction. In the weaker poems the voice is too literal and susceptible to verbiage. Yet in 'Poetry and Religion', an unwieldy piece that stretches too far beyond its potential, for example, there is evidence of Murray's skill; a persistent reader may discover the poem within the poem:

Nothing's said till it's dreamed out in words  
and nothing's true that figures in words only.

Murray's experiments with form can be found across the collection, but most of the poems are written freely. While Murray's lines become tauter as the collection continues, and his line breaks become more aggressive and challenging, the basic themes and forms are explored over and over. You get the sense that Murray found a poetic

voice early on, and while he has learnt much about modulating that voice, he has felt little need for a new tongue. But the voice that speaks within the later poems isn't necessarily any more confident than that of the earlier pieces. If anything, the poet reveals an increasing sense of vulnerability, often through seemingly personal poems recalling a childhood. In 'Burning Want' we read:

But all my names were fat-names, at my new town school.

Between classes, kids did erocide: destruction of sexual morale.

Mass refusal of unasked love; that works. Boys cheered as seventeen-year-old girls came on to me, then ran back whinnying ridicule.

The pieces taken from his 2002 collection *Poems the Size of Photographs* provided welcome relief at a point in this *Selected* when the form and content of his longer work had become predictable, even wearying. In these shorter poems, I rediscovered Murray's sharpness, his ability to deftly render image into word. Here is a complete poem, 'Visitor':

He knocks at the door  
and listens to his heart approaching.

The work that follows the *Photographs* poems is more anarchic. 'Panic Attack' immediately precedes 'Sunday on a Country River' and, strangely, Murray seems to simultaneously be at his most contemporary, and most traditional, in these later pieces. The final poem in the book is 'Industrial Relations', a perplexing poem that seems both to confirm and contradict antonymous interpretations of Murray's politics, poetics and philosophy.

Murray's *Selected Poems* is an opportunity to find the points where reputation and the written record intersect and, importantly, to hear the poet speak in his own language. Something of the breadth of Murray's work is on display here. The themes and forms that have contributed to his reputations are also on display, as are his strengths and weaknesses. The result is a book of almost three hundred

pages that reveals much about our most recognisable living poet and the fascinatingly contested place he has hewn for himself within the poetic landscape of Australia.

First published in *Cordite Poetry Journal*, 11 February 2008.

## Appendix 12: Arts Review

'Canon Fodder'

*Lucinda Strahan*

Exhibition reviewed: Nick Mangan—In the Crux of Matter  
Sutton Gallery, 254 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, until 22 October

An unusual and sophisticated sense of space and perspective informs Nick Mangan's drawing and sculpture.

Put plainly, Mangan imagines the shape of space, but not in a purely abstract sense. His sculptural articulations are always situated in actual objects, that is, they are explorations of a certain kind of space. And it is the kind of space that Mangan finds most fascinating, that is the most fascinating thing about his work.

Mangan imagines shapes in the space inside industrial objects. Previously, it has been in wheelie bins and sub-woofer car speakers. In this sell-out exhibition at Sutton Gallery (his first solo show), it is the shapes of a breath passing through an industrial respirator, the shapes of the heat and energy coming off the chassis of a road bike and the shapes of the light and movement inside a photocopier that has captured his imagination.

His use of ready-made industrial objects as the site for these abstract formal investigations reveals an intriguing creative perspective, which seems to be formed by the equal forces of a rigorous

commitment to the lessons of fine art's canon and an adolescence (not long left behind) in Geelong.

Situating these sophisticated formal investigations in a context that points to the mundane mechanics of the everyday places Mangan square where he belongs—on the tail-end of the generation of Melbourne artists emerging in the 1990s on the 1st Floor-Gertrude Street axis, whose work displays both a deep commitment to the rigours of fine art practice and a highly developed sense of contemporary art's cultural contingency.

First published in *The Age*, 2 October 2003.

## **Appendix 13: Researched Article**

**'An Integral Part of Democratic Debate? Talk Radio  
and the Public Sphere'**

*Carolyn Lee*

### **Abstract**

After establishing former Prime Minister John Howard's preference for radio appearances over all other types of media, I examine the extent to which a particular iteration of talkback has the capacity to enhance public sphere activity, given the view that this medium is being strategically utilised by politicians to gain virtually uncontested access to listeners. This paper addresses the necessity for program-specific analysis in radio research by focusing on Jon Faine's Morning Program on ABC Radio 774 (Melbourne), an examination that occurs principally through a morning's observation of Faine's program. My findings suggest that while a certain amount of 'top-down' flow of information is unavoidable, some contestation of ideas often occurs, mitigating politicians' exploitation of at least this particular program. Faine's program does, moreover, seem to give the impression of an acceptance of listeners calls on topics that affect their daily lives, even though only a small number of 'ordinary' callers are featured each day. My observations suggest this program does offer processes that enhance public sphere activity, although with some qualifications.

## Introduction

It is now no longer news that the period of the Howard government was one in which we saw politicians make increasing use of radio. Indeed, there is a view that there has been 'strategic utilisation of talkback radio by politicians over mainstream news media ...' (Ward, 2002: 21). John Howard, in particular, used radio appearances more than any of his predecessors, favouring this medium for communicating with the public, mainly—it has been suggested—because it enabled him to bypass tough questioning by the Press Gallery. This may well have been a factor, since it is true that radio talk show hosts are generally 'not experts on government policy', as Jon Faine (2005b), host of the ABC Radio 774 Morning show, admits. Faine believes, however, that 'listeners prefer to hear the politicians talk to non-experts' (Faine, 2005b).

Whether or not this is so, as Ward (2002: 24) has shown, the 'strategy of exploiting talkback radio to gain unfiltered access to voters worked well' for the Liberals first during the 1996 election campaign, and Howard continued this practice from then onwards. A brief categorisation of John Howard's 2006 interviews alone showed that radio was clearly his preferred medium, significantly outranking television (34 radio versus 13 television), as well as 'doorstops' (28) in four of the six months in the first half of 2006. Most of these appearances were on talk or talkback radio, reflecting a situation in which radio programs that include talkback segments have become 'the preferred organ for national and state leaders to sell policies and ideas, [and] to get voter feedback ...' (Faine, 2005a: 169). This preference is clearly because of talkback radio's reach: it is the dominant AM format and between 100,000 and 200,000 voters can be listening 'at any instant in a Sydney or Melbourne major interview' (Faine, 2005a: 179). Radio has maintained its dominance as the medium of choice for accessing news. Such popularity is contrary to previous predictions of radio's demise, and may be due to the ease with which radio can be consumed while the listener is simultaneously engaged in other activities, such as commuting, working, or walking. It may also be due to its unique participatory function—its ability to provide an opportunity for listeners to feel they can 'have their say or exercise their democratic rights ...' (Turner et al., 2006: 109). And also, while of course depending very much on the particular program and the

host, there is quite simply—at least in one talk radio host's view—the capacity for talkback radio to provide to a far greater extent than television, a 'contest of ideas' (Faine, 2005a: 171). If Faine's assertion is correct, talkback radio—or at least his particular brand of it—would seem to be capable of contributing to the health of the democratic public sphere in 21st century Australia. But how does this capacity square with Ward's arguments, quoted above, of the 'strategic utilisation' of the medium by politicians, of their 'exploitation' of it to gain 'unfiltered access to voters'? Such a view, of exploitation by elites, suggests that radio, despite its talkback segments, facilitates a 'top down' flow of communication; if this is the case, the effect would see a bolstering of existing terms of power, rather than an 'enhancing [of] the sorts of practices necessary for the making of democratic citizens ... [practices that require] the articulation of interests from below as well as above' (Kane, 1998: 154). This conundrum is surely one of abiding concern to anyone with an interest in talkback radio, and will constitute the focus of this paper.

### **Researching Talkback Radio: a Review of the Literature**

In research in this field, the terms 'talk radio' and 'talkback' are often used interchangeably, although Faine argues for the following distinction: 'Talk radio involves interviews with guests. Talkback requires the host—with or without a guest—to interact with callers over the phone' (Faine, 2005a: 173). Faine's program encompasses both aspects. Ward, on the other hand, uses the term 'talkback' in a wider sense: talkback radio, he says, 'mixes calls from listeners, commentary on public affairs, pre-arranged interviews and newsbreaks ...' (Ward, 2002: 21). For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term 'talkback radio' to describe any radio program that includes segments when listeners can ring in to talk to either the host, or to one of the interviewees (such programs will of course include some or many interviews with guests in which callers cannot participate).

The contestation surrounding the very term talkback may reflect the historical lack of research in the area of Australian talk/talkback radio, although in the last few years such research has started to burgeon. Turner et al. (2006: 107) cite the main 'pioneers' in this area (a list that includes Adams and Burton, Cook, Pearson and Potts, Mickler, and Ward), but add the rider that 'for the most part ... those

researching talkback radio are still seeking the analysis, data or arguments that might help them to better understand the kind of role it plays both within the mediascape and within the community at large' (Turner et al., 2006: 108). My own research is an intervention in the second category, because there still does not seem to have been 'much in the way of academic interest or analysis' (Turner et al., 2006: 107) in the relationship between talkback and processes that might enhance civic life in the Australian democratic public sphere.

The participation of talkback radio callers, though, and the topics canvassed, form the focus of a paper giving the 'early results from an ARC-funded project on the content, audience and influence of Australian talkback radio' by Turner et al. (2006: 107). The findings from that study are beginning to 'narrow down the kinds of questions we need to ask as we move towards more sophisticated analysis of this media form [given its position as] structurally embedded in the political process' (Turner et al., 2006: 107).

Until lately, then, the majority of studies into talk radio have been American, although Australian research has nevertheless included significant and groundbreaking work, such as Turner's 2001 study of the infamous Sydney talkback radio hosts' (John Laws and Alan Jones) 'cash for comment' scandal, an incident that served as a prime example of how 'political participation [is] restricted by those who [have] access to influencing media content' (Turner, 2001: 356). Another important Australian study in the same year, by Ward, quoted at the start of this paper, charted both the rise, and the rise in respectability, of talkback radio, and the increasing use being made of it by politicians (Ward, 2001). Whilst Ward's research would tend to demonstrate the model of the 'top-down' flow of communication, as I mentioned earlier, recent studies suggest the actual practice of talkback radio is more complex. As Turner explains, drawing on Tebbutt's research, this medium has also provided listeners with a significant break from hearing the voices of 'experts', and 'notable people', and has given voice to women and other marginalised groups (Turner, 2005). As Herbst has shown, talkback programs can 'provide an excellent, unstructured outlet for public discourse ... [and] let callers (those who can get through) express themselves in their own words—sometimes at great length' (Herbst, 1995: 270).

It would seem, then, that talkback radio provides—at least to some extent, a unique space viable for civic society or public sphere activity (Kane, 1998: 154) in the absence of any such space elsewhere, a point noted by Turner in his suggestion that Australian talkback radio provides opportunities to ‘contest, reconstruct and redefine existing terms and relations of power in the media through direct critical engagement’ (Turner, 2001: 356). A crucial result of such ‘critical engagement’ might well be increased political participation (see Barker, 1998 and 2002; Bennett, 2001; Hofstetter and Gianos, 1997; Hofstetter, 1998; Page and Tannenbaum, 1996; Barker, 1998).

In my current research—in which I closely examine *Jon Faine’s Morning Show*—while my main focus is not on political participation, I do view Faine’s program as having a great deal to do with ‘politics’ in both the wide and narrow sense of the word. Of course, since the ABC is the public broadcaster, both Faine and his producers need to ensure they do not reveal any political partisanship, or anything that could leave them open to charges of ideological bias (impossible though it is always to avoid such charges); nevertheless, such constraints do ensure that Faine’s program could be described as ‘moderate’ rather than ‘radical’ or ‘conservative’.

Be that as it may, the link between talkback listening and political mobilisation is problematic because increased political participation does not preclude outright misinformation obtained as a result of listening to talkback, as demonstrated by research into levels of misinformation in public affairs knowledge possessed by listeners to talkback radio, revealed in studies by Barker (2002), Bennett (2001), and Hofstetter (1999). Another study, of listeners to both moderate and conservative talkback radio programs, found that although political talk radio ‘has been associated with increased general political participation ... and awareness of issues ...’ (Hofstetter and Barker, 1999: 353), this effect is not universal: listeners to conservative talk radio were found to be more misinformed (than were other programs’ listeners who were studied) about ideologically charged matters and about political facts. This study also found that:

Somewhat surprisingly, the more one listens to moderate talk, the less misinformed one tends to be regarding these

matters ... [although] these findings do not mean that moderate talk radio programming necessarily does a better job than conservative talk programming at providing listeners with accurate information. Those inclined to listen to moderate programming may be more fair-minded than conservative talk listeners, something that the shows themselves cannot control (Hofstetter and Barker, 1999: 353).

## Methodology

As I flagged earlier in this paper, there seems to be some inherent tension between, on the one hand, the ‘top down’ flow of information that would appear to feature inescapably in a medium as favoured by the powerful as talkback has proved to be and, on the other hand, the ‘contest of ideas’ model of talkback, as argued by Jon Faine (and presumably by other hosts of programs of similar calibre). In the context of this tension I’m prompted to ask about the kinds of roles might talkback might radio play in the public sphere. This question needs to be followed immediately by another—what type of program do we mean? For talkback is not a singular formation by any means, and if research is to have any sort of analytic usefulness, we need to articulate clear ‘distinctions between iterations of the format’ (Turner et al. 2006: 109).

As I have already mentioned, the specific iteration of talkback I have chosen to examine so far, in the current paper and in its forerunner (see Lee, 2005), is Jon Faine’s Morning program on ABC Radio 774. My choice of this format was based on three main factors: first, the dire necessity for program-specific analysis in radio research; and second because Faine is an ideal case study due to his self-consciousness about his role, often commenting reflectively on his own talkback processes (albeit usually quite glowingly!), both on-air, and also in other public or semi-public formats, such as university or public lectures, and most recently in his chapter in Robert Manne’s book *Do Not Disturb: Is the Media Failing Australia?* (2005). The central argument of Faine’s chapter in Manne, foreshadowed by its title ‘Talk Radio and Democracy’, is that ‘while there are sometimes flaws in the way it is conducted, [talk radio] has become an integral part of the democratic debate ...’ (Faine, 2005a: 188). While few would

dispute that the dialogic interaction made possible by talkback radio stimulates processes of democratic deliberation that may well enhance civil life and the public sphere, this function will be greatly dependent upon the range of contending viewpoints that are aired.

In order to gain some preliminary sense of the range of viewpoints, for my earlier paper (Lee, 2005), which my current research extends, I conducted a week of observations of the topics aired on Faine's program, starting on Monday 11 July 2005, and narrowed my focus to a case study of a particularly important topic—euthanasia—first raised by one caller on that day, a terminally ill Victorian man named Steve Guest who rang to make a plea for euthanasia to be legalised. Focussing on this case study, I showed how Guest's initial phone call 'was to have a dialogic effect that spread out in ripples across public life in Melbourne for weeks to come' (Lee, 2005: 41), strongly stimulating processes of deliberation about euthanasia in the wider community. Such deliberative phenomena offer, according to Cottle (2002), the opportunities for 'democratic deepening'.

I argued at the time, and still do, that while it's true that all citizens cannot be personally involved in deliberation and dialogue, we can listen to the dialogic exchanges of others, and use these experiences to form our own judgments. But for this to occur, people need not only the rhetorical space of talkback radio, but also the acceptance to raise topics that affect their lives. From the point of view of the listener, it certainly *sounds* as if Jon Faine's program provides such acceptance. This, then, was my third reason for choosing his program as my object of study—but I wanted to test my assumption by observing the processes operating on the callers-in, and to discover more about how Faine chooses his topics, interviewees and callers, by specifically asking Faine to explain how he chose topics, interviews, and callers.

Before conducting my observation, in order to add to my specific knowledge of Faine's recent program content, I assembled a 'constructed week' of his program. I did this by recording, over a five-week period in July and August 2005, editions from five different weekdays of the program, broadcast from 8.30 a.m. to noon every weekday on Melbourne Radio Station 774 (that is, I ended up with a set of five Monday to Friday programs, each day taken from different, consecutive week). I intended this to complement my observations

from September 19 2005 when I sat in Faine's producers' studio from 8.30 a.m. through to 12 noon, and observed through the large plate-glass panel separating the two studios as Faine conducted his entire program for the morning. My objective here was to observe, record and examine the practices, by Faine and his producers, of structuring the content of the whole program, of dealing with callers, of selecting topics, and of conducting both interviews and the actual talkback discussions.

I followed my morning of observation by interviewing Jon Faine at the conclusion of his program. For my questions I drew on, and often problematised, assertions Faine had made in his chapter in Robert Manne's book (Manne, 2005), as well as on air during many of his shows.

### **Research Questions**

In light of the whole discussion so far, my research questions are as follows:

- 1 What kinds of roles might certain iterations of talkback radio (in this case *Jon Faine's Morning Program*) play in the public sphere?
- 2 To what extent does Faine's program provide a forum for listeners to raise for discussion topics that affect their lives?
- 3 How does Faine choose his topics, interviewees and callers?

### **Analysis/Discussion**

*'Giving you the chance to be heard' (unless you're at the end of the queue)*

There's little doubt that Jon Faine and his producers fit a prodigious amount of content into each three-and-a-half hour program: the main topical issues that Faine, with the assistance of his producers, has chosen, and the talkback segment that follows this; the frequent traffic reports, hourly news, weather and sports reports; stock exchange reports; news from the local papers with an editor from Leader (local) newspapers; the special weekly talkback sections such as the Talkback Lawyer, who answers callers' legal questions; the Open Line (a second talkback segment); and the Conversation Hour that includes a co-host and one or more guests or interviewees.

On my day of observation, September 19 2005, Faine started the program with the main feature—his own overview of the just-released book *The Latham Diaries*, by recently resigned former opposition leader Mark Latham, a book that Faine said ‘dished the dirt’ on the political process. Although Faine always sounds as if he’s talking ‘off the cuff’, for much of his commentary he reads from typed sheets (although I only saw this on my one day in the studio, it was corroborated by his producers). As a counterpoint, I assume, to the negative commentary that the Latham book had received, from then Prime Minister John Howard and then Leader of the Opposition Kim Beazley downwards, the next segment of the program featured a phone interview with Leeanda Wilton, the sister of the late MP Greg Wilton, who had committed suicide five years earlier. Ms Wilton stated that Latham’s criticisms of Kim Beazley (in his book) for not contacting or supporting her brother in the lead-up to his suicide were true. It was Latham, she claimed, who had offered support to her late brother and afterwards to her family.

The inclusion of this call highlights a number of issues: Ms Wilton, a person with close connection to the political ‘elite’, if not a member herself, rang and offered the phone interview, according to the producers. Because she was quite explicitly criticising Beazley, one of Faine’s two producers called Beazley’s office to give him right of reply: ‘I’ve got Beazley’s office on [line] 1360 ...’ Beazley did not, however, on this occasion respond to the invitation, at least not during this program. One person who did respond, after hearing the Wilton call, was a psychiatrist, who then rang to talk to Faine about suicide. This is not a segment of the program that generally includes ‘talkback’, but the producers agreed to let this caller through (a move approved by Faine), and put him on hold until the Wilton interview finished, at which time the psychiatrist gave a professional view of the factors leading to suicide in general. These first two callers, Wilton and the psychiatrist, could be termed ‘talkback’ callers, since both were responding to material Faine was presenting; yet at the same time they are each, to a certain extent, ‘experts’. Despite the valid contributions to the topic by each of these callers, then, the rhetorical space thus far constructed on this particular morning could not really be described as providing ‘the unstructured outlet for public discourse’ that Herbst (1995: 270) argues talkback programs are capable of doing.

The second major feature on Faine's program of September 19 was a state issue—the contentious tolls on freeways—about which Andrew McIntosh, Shadow Attorney General was interviewed by phone. When McIntosh broke into any sort of opaque 'weasel' talk (Watson, 2003), such as 'We're striving for flexible responses ...', Faine stopped him with, 'I'm sorry, I didn't understand a word of that. Could you please explain what it means?' I've heard Faine do this on many occasions to members of elite groups, whether from parliament or from business, and I would argue that it's a strategy for demystifying some of the language of elites, something that might be a useful strategy to 'help citizens obtain information to make reasoned political judgments' (Bennett, 2001: 72), a function of talk radio, according to Bennett.

After the first of the regular 'traffic reports', Faine reminded listeners of the phone number for talkback callers (1300 222 774) for the first talkback segment—on the topics he had just covered—as well as reiterating the current promotional line: 'Giving you the chance to be heard.' And indeed, callers are first heard by one of the two producers, who always offer to ring the caller straight back if they are calling from a mobile, an equitable practice, since it removes from the caller the financial burden of 'holding on' for a length of time.

The producers then ask the callers what they have rung to talk about, and they then put the callers on hold, record their topics and link them to a specific telephone line. The calls are then put through to Faine in a certain order, probably of interest (in the producers' views), judging by the dialogue I heard between the two producers, of which the following is a sample:

'We'll take no. 6 first; she's excellent.'

'Tony from Eildon is on Line 1. He thinks Latham's book is a wake-up call.'

'Lines 3 and 5 are pretty strong, and line 2 is funny.'

Although I did not hear the producers refuse to let any callers go on to talk to Faine, sometimes a caller who had been placed towards the back of the queue (possibly due to how 'interesting' their call was

thought to be) was dropped off, if Faine ran out of time in that particular talkback segment (for example, producer to caller: 'Geraldine, I'm sorry, but we're not going to get to your call.'). This happened several times during my morning's observation. Another type of culling occurs when Faine himself cuts off a call, possibly in case it might result in legal action, or is likely to be too unsubstantiated to be credible, or perhaps because he gets a whiff of a personal vendetta by the caller against someone. For example, one caller, named 'Miles', said he had some 'off the record' information from a politician. Faine refused to take this call.

Although Faine had said, during a July edition of his program, that he was just a 'cipher', when I asked during my interview of him if he really believed this, he qualified it with: 'No, we're more like filters. We look at everything that's going on, assess it, get as much as possible out in the open, into the 'marketplace of ideas', so that it can be discussed. But we do make choices and decisions. We have to. Not absolutely everything can be aired.' (Faine, 2005b) The concept of the 'marketplace of ideas', has been problematised, of course—for example Hofstetter et al. (1999: 366) suggest this marketplace now 'functions more like a "supermarket of ideas", where ideas compete not so much on the basis of merit' but rather on their packaging or presentation. It would surely be impossible for this *not* to be a factor, I argue, given 'the enormous numbers of press releases' (Faine, 2005b) Faine receives daily, and from which only one or two can be chosen: 'The fax machine is going constantly with them coming in. We use maybe one or two to generate interviews' (Faine, 2005b).

A further process that impacts upon selection of callers is where Faine finishes discussing a certain topic with callers, and then moves on to a second topic. If a caller rings in to talk about the first, the producers tell them, 'We're not taking any more calls on that at the moment, but you can ring back in an hour [for the Open Line] if you like.' The Open Line, which runs from 10.45 to 11.00 a.m., is the fifteen-minute talkback session to which callers are invited to phone in on any issue of concern. The issues raised can range enormously (see Lee, 2005), and have been dubbed parochial and banal by some commentators (see for example, Alcorn, 2005), although as I have shown (Lee, 2005), they can range from council rulings on the lengths of dog-leads through to calls for the legalisation of euthanasia.

The number of callers that can be included in The Open Line (based on my total of five recordings and my one observation) also ranges from about four through to six or eight, depending on how long each conversation takes. There are at least two significant functions of these Open Line calls. The first is that they are often able to generate topics that Faine might raise on future programs (for more on this, see Lee, 2005). During my observation, this was certainly in evidence—for example, one caller rang in to complain about telemarketing, including the type practised by Australian companies now employing people to call from offshore. I then heard one of the producers say to the other: ‘Why don’t we find out the companies involved and find out who’s managing this?’

The second function is that when Faine hears something that he decides sounds like unjust treatment, he will direct the caller back to the producers to take details, and will promise to ‘ask questions for you’. The example of this that occurred during my observation was when a man called in to say he had been working in Thailand for the Defence Department for 17 years, and had a Thai wife and daughter; he’d now been sent back to Australia, but his wife and daughter were not allowed in. Both of these functions demonstrate a certain amount of ceding of editorial control (despite the ordering by the producers as calls come in), as do the diverse nature of the calls themselves, a format that Cottle (2002) has shown to offer opportunities for democratic deepening.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that this format does offer opportunities for democratic processes, although to a limited extent. The wide range and large amount of other content needed to sustain a program of this length, and for such a wide audience, means that only about half an hour of actual talkback can be fitted in each day.

Elite callers would seem to be able to garner more ready access to Faine, supporting the ‘supermarket’ rather than ‘marketplace’ of ideas concept, where packaging is an important factor. A certain amount of ‘top down’ flow of information, is unavoidable, then, especially when the ‘elite callers’ factor is coupled with the many politicians who are interviewed. However, whilst Faine is certainly not, in his own words ‘an expert on government policy’ (Faine, 2005b),

he nevertheless often does contest the words of elites. Ineed, in my interview with him, he outlined another strategy he uses: ‘What we’re likely to do, if we’re interviewing a minister, say, is [to] wave a press release from the opposition or someone, and say, “Well, X says this about what you’re doing, what do you say to that?”’ (Faine, 2005b). Faine has problematised the preference of politicians for the talk radio medium, arguing that

out of respect for and deference to the skills of the special-ists [political journalists], surely it would be in the public interest—and would make for a more open and accounta-ble form of politics—if the political leaders of the nation opened themselves up more regularly to chats with those who cover that patch more exclusively. After all, as well as dealing with the prime minister and federal politics, I do take calls on pet care with the talkback vet on the same morning. (Faine, 2005a: 183)

But of course, ‘it is a rare radio host who says “no” to the early morning call from the prime minister’s press secretary offering the nation’s leader willing to talk over the issues of the day’ (Faine, 2005a: 172). Still, despite this preference for radio by John Howard and many other politicians, my data suggest that Faine does ask questions that lend weight to his claim of the ‘contest of ideas’ function of talk radio (2005a: 171). In my view, this means that programs such as Faine’s, and similar iterations, do to a certain extent mitigate what Ward sees as politicians’ exploitation of talkback programs ‘to gain unfiltered access to voters’ Ward (2002: 24).

So whilst the rhetorical space provided by Faine’s program, and by kindred iterations, is not completely unfiltered, neither is it unstructured (because of the moderation by his producers and by Faine). There are ostensibly reasons for this: an unstructured free-for-all could easily end up as an unsatisfying experience for listeners, destroying the very rhetorical space it seeks to create. As it stands, Faine’s program certainly would certainly *seem* to many listeners, I argue, to be offering acceptance of ‘ordinary’ callers’ views, thereby providing at least the potential opportunity for listeners to feel they can ‘exercise their democratic rights’ (Turner et al., 2006: 109); even

though only a small percentage ever do call up, with only a dozen or fewer actually having 'their say' on any one day. Nevertheless, the evidence from my detailed observation of this iteration of talkback (supported by the patterns apparent in the five recorded programs from the previous two months), suggest that it would appear to offer significant processes that enhance civic life in the Australian democratic public sphere, although there is of course potential for further enhancement. I'm aware, however, that the views of actual listeners are tantalisingly absent from this study, an area that could form a fruitful focus for further research into this particular iteration of talkback radio.

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## Appendix 14: Sample Tax Invoice

### TAX INVOICE

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Carolyne Lee  
Freelance Writer  
ABN (obtain one)  
Address  
Phone  
Email

Today's date  
The editor's name  
The newspaper's name  
Address

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Insert date article was supplied	Title of article	\$200 (no GST necessary)

Thank you