Globaloney and the Australian Writer

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Don't worry about Australian literature. It's fine. It's just calling itself something else. (Anonymous web log, Oct. 10 2006)

I teach Australian literature at a university, but I had to leave Australia to do it. (Anonymous web log, Nov. 10 2006)

Introduction

In an essay now just over twenty years old, Peter Pierce laments what he calls the 'dichotomising habit' of Australian literary historians (Pierce, 1988 88). Pierce testily suggests that '[t]he literary histories of Australia that invent different issues of debate, that abandon residual insecurities concerning the value of local materials (insecurities implied by the dichotomising habit and the melodramatic temper of debate) remain to be written' (88)—a challenge since energetically met by a number of histories (e. g. the 1998 *Oxford*) and companions (e. g. the 2000 *Cambridge*) that seem to me at least to be neither melodramatic nor dichotomous, and that bring academic discussions surrounding the national literature more or less fully up to date. However, Pierce's observation still arguably holds for *public* discussions, many of them involving academics, and in which the present and future of Australian literature are confidently presented from a series of often directly opposing points of view. One view, the industry equivalent to the 'gloom thesis' (Docker 1984), proposes that Australian literature is *dying*, and cites evidence in dwindling recruitment and enrolment numbers at Australian universities, and in the depressing number of Australian literary classics that are currently out of print (Koval *et al* 2006). The other view, equally forthright, is that Australian literature is *booming*, not least because of structural changes brought about to the publishing industry by globalisation, and as evidenced in the flourishing of Australian literature in international markets, in the expansion of writers' prizes and festivals, and in the active contribution of Australian writers, both 'high-art' and popular, to ongoing discussions of Australian national culture in an increasingly mediatised public sphere (Carter & Ferres 2001; Dixon 2007).

Neither of these views is strictly wrong; the main problem is how to reconcile them: how to account for the new life of Australian literature—and, by association, Australian literary studies—in an era of globalisation and the media-driven transformation of the public sphere (Carter & Ferres 2001). The problem is exacerbated by a tendency—in Australia and elsewhere—to make sweeping statements about globalisation: statements that are by no means restricted to the media, and are often wilfully exaggerated or strategically distorted in their effects. One word popularly given to these distortions is 'globaloney', breezily defined by the American political commentator Michael Veseth as a 'critique of the rhetoric of globalization' designed to uncover the 'vivid images, clever metaphors, and persuasive narratives that manipulate […] our understanding of globalization' structures and processes that are far more complex, contradictory even, than these simplified images, metaphors and narratives suggest (Veseth, 2005 2-3). Globaloney blows the whistle on those who intend to use globalisation to 'sell a

particular viewpoint or political agenda' (3), although, as Veseth's own work unwittingly reveals (and this essay, in turn, may well turn out to illustrate) it is often quite difficult to expose the workings of globaloney without perpetrating some version or other of globaloney oneself.

Examples of globaloney, according to Veseth, are end-of-ideology arguments related to the triumph of global capitalism; the myth of a borderless world; and the similarly fabled emergence of a new post-national order that blithely 'confirms' the withering away of the modern nation-state. Globaloney, as I will argue here, also affects perceptions of Australian literature, from the baleful pronouncement that it is dying to the Panglossian assertion that things have never been so good. Both assessments, as Veseth suggests, are 'interested', the former in so far as it defends an idealistic view of Australian literature as academia's chosen vehicle for cultural nationalism, now threatened by a new (global-commercial) form of imperialism; and the latter in so far as it presents a pragmatic—pseudo-populist if still largely academic—view of literature's role in a globalised media and communications industry that holds illimitable sway over all aspects of artistic life (Carter 2007).

This essay aims to go beyond such dichotomous views, not so much in order to present—if this were ever possible—a 'true picture' of Australian literature and Australian literary studies at the present global moment as to suggest that the future of both will depend, first, on the cultivation of media-savvy forms of 'transnational literacy' (Spivak 1999) and global consciousness; and, second, on a continued, possibly increased willingness on the part of Australian-based literary and critical practitioners to include what is being done *outside* Australia as an integral part of the Australian literary industry—as Australian cultural work (Callahan 2002). Cultural nationalism, I want to suggest, continues—for better or worse—to shadow Australian debates about globalisation in all sectors of society, not least the arts and entertainment sector, even when extreme statements are made of the order of Mark Davis's, that the 'cultural-nationalist, protectionist moment is over' (Davis, 2006 105)—a statement I aim to show is no more convincing than its tiresomely ubiquitous conservative correlate, that Australian literature is dead. In what follows, I will first look briefly at the impact of globalisation on Australia and, more specifically, its impact on the Australian literary industry, concentrating on four linked processes—deregulation, diversification, individualisation and 'informationisation'—that all provide quantifiable evidence of contemporary 'globalisation effects' (Appadurai 1996). I will then look at the production—not just the reception or consumption—of Australian literature offshore, focusing on what is frequently asserted to be the existence of a new 'colonised market' (Lyons and Arnold 2001) for Australian literature in a global era, and on the residual suspicion still shown towards the figure of the expatriate writer—particularly the *famous* expatriate writer—at a time when the cultural phenomenon of celebrity is reshaping perceptions not just of 'who counts' as an Australian writer, but also of what the nation itself represents within an increasingly transnational public sphere. The basic argument driving the whole will be that cultural nationalism continues, despite increasingly regular announcements of its demise, to provide the ideological bedrock for debates about the future of Australian literature; and, more provocatively perhaps, that it continues to generate significant globaloney of its own.

Globalisation and the Australian literary industry

My working definition of globalisation is taken here from the Australian social scientist Anthony Moran's 2005 study *Australia: Nation, Belonging, and Globalization*, which belongs to a book series that looks instructively at how globalisation produces different effects and experiences in different nations and regions of the world. Globalisation, suggests Moran at the beginning of the book, 'may be thought of initially as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life' (Held *et al,* 1999 2, qtd in Moran, 2005 7). Globalisation, he insists, is hardly new; rather, it refers to the intensification and acceleration of earlier processes of deterritorialisation and de-traditionalisation linked to the modern re-organisation of economic, social, cultural and political life (18). Nor, he insists equally, are globalisation's effects as homogenising or all-encompassing as they are often said to be; rather, 'the feeling or sense of being part of a global reality […] is experienced differently in different places', while for some, that feeling or sense may not be not experienced at all (17).

Australia's own experience of globalisation arguably begins with its establishment as a British settler colony: it 'is a nation born of globalization, a fragment of Empire in the New World' (Moran, 2005 1). Contemporary globalisation, however, has rather different connotations to those attached to the embattled history of a settler colony, referring primarily to the range of ways in which Australia, 'opened up' to perceived global realities, is being structurally transformed in keeping with the dominant ideologies (neo-liberalism) and politico-economic systems (consumer capitalism) of the day (Moran, 2005 6-7). These transformations have understandably produced anxiety for Australians, many of whom see themselves as being pitched from one form of imperialism ('British') to another ('American'), and as no longer benefiting from the protective measures taken by earlier federal governments, those forms of national solidarity institutionally produced and promoted by the Australian state (Moran, 2005 26). Not least among these anxieties are those relating to national identity and cohesion; for, as Galligan, Roberts and Trifiletti (2001) put it, the civic culture has not kept step with an increasingly deregulated global economy, resulting in the erosion of older models of national belonging and identity, but only the slow emergence of new paradigms of transnational affiliation and global citizenship in their place (Galligan *et al*, 2001 2).

Economic deregulation has also had a profound effect on the Australian publishing industry, whose small internal markets have become increasingly competitive while opportunities for Australian writers—though arguably not *all* Australian writers—have opened up with the expansion of multinational publishing houses, most based in the UK or the US, and other global-corporate media groups (Bird, 2000 184). Deregulation is not all 'bad', despite the nationalist globaloney that sometimes greets it. However, as the recent research of Mark Davis among others has shown, it has helped consolidate the domination of the Australian book-publishing industry by a handful of 'global media giants' (93), with one noticeable effect being what Davis calls 'the decline of the literary paradigm' (91), as publishers move to integrate with a 'global information economy primarily oriented around trade between and within Europe, the USA and Japan' (Davis, 2006 99).[1] Australian literary fiction, for example, seems to have been a big loser in the global publishing sweepstakes; no longer likely to be subsidised as a low-volume but 'culturally significant' market segment in an increasingly profit-oriented industry, it is marginalised by Australian booksellers looking to consolidate

business by basing stock input on media-generated bestseller lists (101). Davis's considered view is that:

> the decline of the literary paradigm [in Australia] is part of a wider trend to the commodification of all cultural forms that is typical of the drive within neo-liberal societies to transform social relationships of the sort that once underpinned literary production, with its reliance on government support, coterie culture and education systems, into market relationships wherein all potentially profitable forms of cultural production become media properties. (Davis, 2006 102-3)

A rather different view is the one proposed by David Carter and Kay Ferres, who also speak (admittedly five years earlier) of the restructuring of the Australian publishing industry under the hyper-competitive conditions of global capitalism, but who choose to see this process as having *diversified* Australian literature by integrating it into a reconstituted nexus of media-driven public spheres (Carter & Ferres, 2001 149). Australian literature, argue Carter and Ferres, has not been diminished but rather dispersed as a result of the globalisation of the Australian publishing industry:

> While literature's central authority can no longer be assumed, this does not necessarily tell a simple story of its withering away. If literary texts are now produced, disseminated and—arguably—consumed in much the same way as pop culture commodities, this might also be seen as a sign of literature's contemporary proliferation, its entry into new social relations and public spaces. The literary is still—or once again—consorting with a diversity of kinds of writing, speech and media in constituting public spheres. (149)

While Davis and Carter/Ferres reach different conclusions, their micro-narratives of recent developments in the Australian publishing industry are in many ways quite similar. Australian literature, both parties agree, continues to attract reasonably consistent levels of government sponsorship, e. g. through the diversified programmes of the Australia Council; but—so Davis argues—the period of sustained cultural-nationalist support, lasting roughly from the 1960s to the 1990s, has effectively ended, with a shift towards the promotion of commodified individual authors having taken its place (Davis, 2006 103). One example of this shift is the cultural phenomenon of the celebrity writer, by no means a novelty in Australia, but increasingly a *global* figure (if one marketed, paradoxically, as a mediator of national culture for a hugely profitable Anglophone market offshore). I will have more to say later about this figure and the various contradictions embedded within it; for the moment, suffice to say that global celebrity authors have attracted more than their fair share of globaloney, some of it attached to residual cultural-nationalist sentiments expressed most vehemently when the author in question happens to live abroad.

Before looking more closely at the vexed issue of expatriation, however, one last globalisation effect should probably be mentioned: the so-called 'informationisation' of the Australian among other national publishing industries as a function of economic deregulation and the digitisation of book-publishing processes, from writing and editing to book ordering and inventory control (Davis, 2006 99-100). As Davis points out, book publishing has responded to the 'new' realities of globalisation by becoming an information industry, with business organised not so much around the manufacture of

goods, but rather around the generation of rights for sale (99). New technologies—in particular the ready availability of data bases for market research—have facilitated this change, which is in keeping with Manuel Castells's view of the global information economy as a 'network of linkages between economic agents' whose competitiveness depends 'on their capacity to generate, process, and apply efficiently knowledge-based information' in a globalised world (Castells, 1996 66, qtd in Davis 2006 99). As Davis suggests, the 'informationisation' of the Australian publishing industry has placed literature, especially literary fiction, at a disadvantage, since it generally lacks the capacity for segmentation that makes it suitable for redistribution into a variety of marketable media forms (100). Non-fiction does have this capacity, which might help explain the recent boom in books of 'mixed-genre' essays by Australian writers who, consolidating their authority as public intellectuals, use their writing to address ethical issues and to mediate those 'highly differentiated public spheres [that] characterise [the] multi-ethnic, globalising societies of the information age' (Carter & Ferres, 2001 151).

The 'informationisation' of the Australian publishing industry supports *both* Davis's view that there has been a decline of the literary paradigm *and* Carter/Ferres's view that the last ten years or so have witnessed a significant expansion of Australian literature, e. g. via the media's redefinition of literary culture as a means by which public issues can be debated across a wide variety of often combined genres and literary forms (Carter & Ferres, 2001 150-51). To some extent, the difference between these two views revolves around the definition of 'Australian literature', which, as is well known, came to have a specialised meaning in the second half of the twentieth century as the flagship for a national culture defined in terms of its autonomous creative achievements—achievements no longer to be measured against the yardstick of European canonical norms. These years also saw the professionalisation of Australian literature in the academy and the expansion of government funding for writing and publishing in Australia, both of these processes underlining the self-affirming view of Australian literature as a collective national project, 'an index of the national consciousness if, at the same time, a necessarily unreliable descriptor of the rapidly transforming realities of national social and cultural life' (Huggan, 2007 5).

This picture, while generally agreed on, still requires considerable adjusting. For one thing, the same period also saw the redefinition of public culture by the media, which are now often seen—somewhat hyperbolically—as having come to dominate all practical aspects of Australian literary life (Carter & Ferres, 2001 148). For another, Australian literature, which Richard Nile (Nile, 2002 131) rather optimistically sees as having had much of the field of national expression to itself for the greater part of the century, found itself challenged by other forms of cultural production, especially film, as a primary vehicle for the national imaginary in an implicitly if not explicitly competitive process that put the privileged status of the national literature in question almost as soon as it had institutionally come to life (Turner 1986; O'Regan 1996). The final and perhaps most important point to make here is that Australian literature has always been *trans*national—which is not to say that it has always been cosmopolitan in its outlook, or that the project of national self-affirmation has been diminished by the obvious fact that many of the nation's best-known writers have lived, and continue to live, abroad.[2] This last point seems worth picking up on here, not least because it counteracts more extreme proponents of the cultural-nationalist view who look askance at expatriation, particularly in those instances where it produces criticism of the home

country that ranges in impact and intensity from 'uninformed' expatriate nostalgia to 'unjustified' expatriate rage.

Australian literature offshore

It may not necessarily have been the case, as has recently been argued for Canadian literature, that Australian writers were practising transnationalism since before there *was* an Australian literature (Mount, 2005 162, qtd in York, 2007 174), but Nick Mount's objection that Canada's émigré authors have sometimes been overlooked in the effort to narrate a determinedly Canadian literary history arguably applies—with regional variations—to the history of Australian literature as well (Mount 2005). So too does Lorraine York's suggestion, following on from Mount, that 'expatriates are an important part of [Canada's] national literary narrative' and can be celebrated accordingly, as 'early continentalists, products of globalization *avant la lettre*' (York, 2007 174). For York, Mount's situating of expatriate writers 'shifts between a reformulated nationalism and a celebration of proto-postnationalism' (174)—an observation that arguably holds good for the literary histories of other settler cultures, and that might help explain the distinct ambivalence, sometimes outright hostility, that has been associated with Australian expatriate writers, reaching up to the present day. There are good historical reasons, of course, for Australians' suspicion towards their self-styled cosmopolitan counterparts, not least the ingrained perception of cultural stagnation in Australia that sent a whole raft of aspiring Australian intellectuals and writers to Britain in the wake of the Second World War (Alomes, 1999 8-9). There is no reason to assume that these intellectuals and writers were any more worldly than those who stayed behind, and more than a little evidence of metropolitan snobbery; but there seems little reason, either, to accuse them wholesale of having turned their backs on their home country or as gleefully engaging in self-defeating forms of colonial contempt (Alomes, 1999 15).

Two main problems attend any attempt to assess the contribution of expatriate writing to Australian literature. The first is the term 'expatriate' itself, with its morally tainted connotations of extreme individualism and careerism (Kaplan 2006). The second is that particular perception of expatriate privilege that attaches itself to an unevenly developed book trade in a global market economy (Lyons and Arnold 2001). One partly mythicised version of the story might go like this: that, having expended much of their time and effort pandering to the imagined tastes of English readers, Australian writers now find themselves forced back on the equally imaginary figure of the 'global reader' as model consumer for a marketable version of Australia that is not so familiar that it stops being fascinating, and for which expatriate writers act as privileged 'culture brokers' precisely because they are perceived to be positioned between the country of their choosing and the country of their birth. [3] This second problem ties in with the normalisation of commodity culture under conditions of market liberalism. For if one of the defining characteristics of globalisation is its 'marketisation of cultural space' (Frankel, 2001 234)—its transformation of 'culture' into a saleable commodity—then the double spectacle presents itself of the marketing of Australia as export product (from within Australia) and the marketing of Australia as remembered homeland (from offshore).

A large gap continues to exist between Australian expatriate writers' perceptions of themselves and the suspicion that greets them in their home country—a suspicion that

still seems to have the potential to extend itself to the wide range of activities performed in the name of Australian literary studies abroad. [4] Suspicions are intensified when expatriates dare criticise Australia; as Stephen Alomes wryly remarks of the work of post-war expatriates such as Barry Humphries, Germaine Greer and—in a slightly different category—John Pilger, '[t]hey [have] either [been] seen as perceptive observers, saying what could not be said within the country, or viewed as out-of-touch expatriates who caricature a past Australia as the present […] and have no right to comment [at all]' (Alomes, 1999 15). This second view leads to another, that Australian expatriates effectively represent a cultural hangover from the Empire: 'the last colonial lags', Alomes sardonically calls them, 'transported back to [an imagined homeland, Britain], which for younger Australians [is] no longer a second home' (264). Recent evidence suggests, meanwhile, that the term 'expatriate' itself may be falling out of usage, and that it is being replaced by more ostensibly up-to-date terms such as 'transnational' or 'cosmopolitan', both now standard items in a postcolonial-cum-globalist 'travelling-culture' lexicon that posits displacement, deracination and uprooting as 'the way of the [contemporary] world' (Alomes, 1999 270). According to this view, expatriates are both semantically and psychologically passé: 'Any reality associated with the term has long [since] vanished', declares Clyde Packer in his 1984 book *No Return Ticket*, while Ros Pesman concludes her more recent study of Australian women abroad by reflecting on her daughter, who currently lives in Paris and for whom the decision whether or not to become an expatriate is a non-issue, because under the current conditions of the 'global village', she can 'commute between Europe and Australia at will' (Pesman *et al*, 1996 221-2, qtd in Britain, 1997 243).

Much of this, of course, is globaloney, not because movement isn't in some way defining of contemporary global realities—it clearly is—but because, as 'travelling-culture' theorists themselves acknowledge, there has never been a greater need to distinguish between *kinds* of and *motivations* for movement in a self-evidently destabilised and deterritorialised world. Still, it would be fair to say that the locus of moral debate has now shifted, in Australia and elsewhere, from the figure of the literary *expatriate* to his or her postmodern equivalent, the global *celebrity* writer, in an era in which literature increasingly intersects with the media and communications industries and in which writers must increasingly accommodate themselves, however reluctantly or ironically, with the commodified status that is accorded to them in a globalised world (Nile 2002; York 2007). Four general observations can be made here about celebrities: first, that they are discursively produced through media and other communications networks; second, that they are symptomatic of the blurring of private and public spaces in everyday social life; third, that they are brand names and marketing tools as well as cultural icons and model identities; and fourth, that they are both targets of and vehicles for a wide variety of cultural and ideological debates. To these preliminary observations we might add a fifth: namely, that celebrities are both less important and more important than they seem to be. Another way of saying this is that they carry surplus meaning in relation to the various contexts within which their identities are produced, disseminated and consumed as highly mobile cultural commodities, or, as Turner, Bonner and Marshall put it, 'Celebrities are called up to (and do) carry meaning in situations far beyond what can reasonably be seen to be their professional expertise and to audiences far exceeding those who might be supposed to be interested in the products they represent' (Turner *et al*, 2000 164). These general remarks all apply, to varying degrees, to *literary* celebrities, although, as Graeme Turner warns, 'what constitutes celebrity in one cultural domain may be quite different in another'; the

transferability of celebrity from one cultural medium to another should not be automatically assumed (Turner, 2004 23). Literary celebrity is not the same as, say, cinematic celebrity even though the cultural and economic mechanisms driving both of these forms of celebrity are closely affiliated with a global commodity culture in which the perception of fame creates a series of readily identifiable social effects. In this sense, as Lorraine York argues in her recent study of Canadian literary celebrity, the question of how long celebrity lasts is less significant than what particular effects it creates while it is in operation; in other words, what is important are the particular *uses* that are made of celebrity, not least by those considered—however temporarily—to be celebrities themselves (York, 2007 26). York thus suggests that discussions of literary celebrity must go well beyond which writers are included or not within any given literary canon, taking in the wider economic processes that are at work in the formation of literature as a whole. What is more, this 'remembering of the economic' (28) is necessary for *all* fields of cultural production—all the more so in the overarching context of a global cultural economy in which 'high' and 'popular' products intermingle, and where ideas associated with both circulate as commodities within a correspondingly globalised public sphere.

It is perhaps inevitable that celebrities will be seen by some as apologists for a system in which they operate as commodities, a system they knowingly manipulate to their own advantage even as that system co-opts them for its own, not necessarily compatible, ends. However, the *assumption* of complicity might be seen as another example of globaloney—of the all-powerful hold of the global cultural economy—while such implicitly accusatory 'global' rhetoric can also obscure significant differences in the local ways in which literary celebrities are marketed and understood. To take an Australian example: it is perfectly legitimate to consider Peter Carey as a global celebrity writer in terms of the worldwide impact of his books and professional management of his highly mobile public image; but the reception of his work—not least in Australia—reveals localised tensions between residual 'expatriate' and emergent 'global' readings, while his celebrity is obviously manufactured and managed differently according to whether he and his work are seen from the vantage point of Sydney or New York. In the third and final section of this essay, I want to compare two fairly recent works written by Australian expatriate celebrities, Carey's 2006 novel *Theft: A Love Story* and Germaine Greer's 2003 Quarterly Essay *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood*, both of which I intend to read as partly self-ironic attempts to contend with the negative pressures of celebrity as an effect of the disavowed status of the Australian expatriate celebrity as national icon and of the 'global' circulation of commodified images of Australia and the Australian writer offshore.

Expatriate Games

It has long been fashionable—particularly in Australia—to regard Germaine Greer as being hopelessly, even hilariously unfashionable; unedifying, too, in her continuing propensity to lecture her fellow-Australians about their own shortcomings in what might be described, uncharitably no doubt, as her stock expatriate missionary mode (Clancy, 2004 153). While Greer's own particular experiences of expatriation are hardly enough to explain the volatile mixture of sexual experimentalism and political confrontationalism that underlies her carefully cultivated media persona, they certainly help account for the almost pathological levels of equivocation and inconsistency that have characterised her international celebrity career (Britain, 1997 147). My own

argument here would be that expatriation—which has been formative in Greer's work, despite her understandable dislike for a term that has so often been turned against her—functions as a kind of 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1994) revolving around the paradox of detached attachment. This self-consciously contradictory stance allows *both* for the articulation of national nostalgia from an internationalist perspective *and* for the self-accorded right to critique what she still considers to be her home country from a semi-insider position that is never fully consonant with it, and that mediates instead between (1) the country (Britain) she has chosen to live in but cannot permit herself to identify with and (2) the country (Australia) she has opted to leave but cannot help returning to—a dialectics, we could call it, of repeatedly disavowed adoption and strategically remembered birth. Greer's Australian critics have tended to describe this constitutively ambivalent condition in the clichéd terms of the 'anxiety of exile' (see, for example, Zwicky, 2004 155), but I think a better phrase for it is 'diasporic melancholy' (Brophy 2002), Sarah Brophy's nicely judged term—applied in the first instance to another expatriate writer, the American-based, Antiguan-born Jamaica Kincaid—that joins the ongoing struggle to articulate a feeling of quasi-existential disconnectedness to the nostalgic attempt to imaginatively refashion the place one has definitively left.

Diasporic melancholy certainly courses through one of Greer's more recent attempts to engage imaginatively with her homeland, her almost programmatically provocative 2003 Quarterly Essay, *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood*. A characteristically vituperative exhortation-cum-condemnation in the manner of Swift's notoriously immodest 'modest proposal' (which Greer alludes to at several points in her narrative), *Whitefella Jump Up* is in some respects a fairly standard rehearsal of Greer's well-publicised views on Australia as a land of lotus-eaters, subject to what she calls elsewhere 'the unending tragedy of settlement by Europeans' (qtd in Britain, 1997 147), and whose inhabitants are either ingloriously oblivious or fiercely resistant to the destructive colonial histories that have shaped them (Greer, 2004 12, 22). The essay's central premise is that white Australians, in confronting their own historical condition of denial, will come eventually to acknowledge the 'Aboriginality' of their country, allowing in the process for 'all trappings of fake Britishness [to] be ditched' (125). Aboriginality, Greer insists throughout, has nothing to do with blood or genes, but refers rather to the gradualist process of understanding and acknowledgement that is the prerequisite for a lasting dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and that fosters an awareness of the shared traditions and behaviours that are 'characteristic of the continent itself' (119, 24). Aboriginality, in other words, is a *national* construction in which birth, not race, is the primary criterion for nationality, but in which the category of 'blackness' still retains its collectively empowering authenticity, giving access to the 'truth that lurks beneath the self-congratulatory rhetoric of the [Australian] frontier epic' and making way for a productive re-reading of the nation's foundational cultural myths (53-4).

Greer is well aware of, though still arguably powerless to defend herself from, the potential criticism that this 'new' vision of Aboriginality might be little more than the latest episode in a long and undistinguished history of instrumental 'Aboriginalism', Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra's useful if perhaps unduly homogenising term for the wide variety of pseudo-Aboriginal literary and artistic initiatives that have historically been pressed into the service of white Australian cultural-political ends (Hodge and Mishra 1991). Certainly, it would be easy enough to point out that *Whitefella Jump Up*

is firmly located within a tradition of white Australian redemption narratives, or that it practises an implicitly self-incriminating form of nativist nationalism, all the more incriminating perhaps in that it is practised from beyond the bounds of the nation, i. e. as a particular form of *expatriate* nationalism, nominally shorn of the xenophobic and/or provincialist tendencies of white-settler patriotism and complacently attributing to itself the more worldly vision of the nation given to those who live abroad. This view, naturally enough, is globaloney, as is Greer's assumption, in response to Fay Zwicky's criticism of her essay, that 'diaspora is the true human environment and homeland a murderous delusion' (321). Diasporic consciousness seems to function here, as elsewhere in the essay, as a cosmopolitan alternative to continuing histories of violent nationalist fundamentalism while offering a rhetorical way of grafting a highly personalised apprehension of post-Lukàcsian 'transcendental homelessness' onto a publicly advertised awareness of the social and environmental responsibilities that accrue to living in an increasingly interconnected world.

In fact, it might be argued that one of the main weaknesses of the essay is its *lack* of a sufficiently globalist perspective on Aboriginality, a point well made by the Aboriginal academic-activist Marcia Langton in her carefully modulated response to Greer's work. As Langton argues:

> Greer's vision of Australians somehow coming to adopt "their" Aboriginality is simply at odds with the facts of life in our country today. It's a vision that expresses the needy idealism of the baby-boomer generation, one of waning relevance to the younger generations of Australian intellectuals who lack the sentimentalism of Greer and her cohort and who are assuming ascendancy in public life.
>
> With their access to a global market that empowers them as more than mere consumers, younger Australians are cyber-citizens, at once cosmopolitan and networked. They are able to relate to the Aboriginal world in a less troubled way than their parents and they are almost oblivious to Australia's blinding colonial legacy of white supremacy and race hatred … The reality and variety of the Aboriginal world is available to them as it never was to their parents. And for that reason they do not need to invent an Australia wrapped up in Aboriginal symbolism. (Langton, 2004 164-5)

While Langton's critique arguably underestimates the extent to which younger Australians can remain simultaneously cosmopolitan *and* parochial, it usefully counteracts the 'old-school' cultural nationalism underlying Greer's appeal to Aboriginality, which effectively subordinates Indigenous to national self-determination, and which disingenuously sees nationalisation as a solution to Australia's ongoing social and environmental problems, e. g. in the increasingly intractable issue of legislating contested claims to the ownership and custodianship of Crown land (112). National self-affirmation, Greer seems to imply, must necessarily precede global alliances though, in what is the last and possibly most bizarre twist to her Aboriginalist victim narrative, she lays claim to Australia's collective status as a 'hunter and gathererer nation' making common cause with other beleaguered hunter-gatherer peoples in the pursuit of greater social equality and justice in the arena of world affairs (128).

This view of Australia is, as Tony Birch puts it, 'strategically insane' and apparently forearmed for the ridicule it both invites and anticipates (Birch, 2004 178, 171). Yet if Greer's long-distance nationalism succeeds to some extent in avoiding the temptation to assimilate Aboriginal knowledge—in part by laughing off its own melodramatic tendencies to 'positive racism' (Jordan, 2004 187)—it falls into the opposite trap of disregarding the *trans*national alternatives already embedded within, say, contemporary global Indigenous movements—alternatives which make a nonsense of her inadvertently romanticised assertion that '[t]he difference between Aboriginal peoples and other minorities [in Australia] is that for them Australia, and a particular part of Australia at that, is the *only* country in the world' (Greer, 2004 93; emphasis hers). This assertion runs the risk of reverting to the nationalist exceptionalism to which Greer's essay rightly takes issue; indeed, I would go so far as to argue that the central conflict in the text is not produced by her spirited attempt to re-attach 'white' to 'black' visions and versions of Australia, but by her correspondingly sentimentalist failure to see that all Australians, white and black, must continually renegotiate their relationship not just with each other but with the wider world. Thus, far from profiting from the allegedly worldly perspective of the expatriate author as seasoned cultural traveller, Greer's essay belatedly rehearses a cultural-nationalist rhetoric of embattled Australianness that effectively turns its face from the global realities of present-day Australia, and that substitutes a marketable version of long-distance nationalism for a more detailed historical understanding of the nation's inevitably changing socio-political position within an increasingly globalised world.

In Greer's defence, much more globaloney has been perpetrated in her name than she herself could possibly have committed: an occupational hazard perhaps of being a self-acknowledged, energetically self-advertising cultural celebrity in what remains—as much because of as in spite of globalisation—an unevenly developed world. A similarly self-ironic view of fame can be found in the work of another expatriate-cum-global celebrity, Peter Carey, who seems to have been spared—but then again didn't invite—the worst excesses of Australian 'Greerophobia', but some of whose self-consciously mythicised assertions about Australia have made him the target of Australian cultural-nationalist globaloney just the same. Since Carey first burst onto the Australian literary scene in the mid 70s, he has rapidly made a name for himself as Australia's internationally best-known literary figure, a self-consciously 'national author' who has long since chosen to live outside the nation; and whose cleverly crafted fictions, playing on popular perceptions of a distinctly Australian idiom, have probably done more than any other contemporary writer's to create an authentic image of Australia, managed and marketed from abroad (Turner 1993). Of course, Carey has been nothing if not alert to the ironies inherent in his status as 'familiar Australian' and (since the move to New York) 'exotic internationalist' (Takolander & McCooey, 2004 61)—a dual starring role he has consistently manipulated in order to sustain a fictional identity that simultaneously functions as a lure for national and international book consumers and as a means of legitimising the work of the once-provincial writer from Bacchus Marsh, now living it up in the world's most exciting metropolis, New York (Takolander & McCooey 2004).

Carey's global success has come at a price, though, with some critics voicing professional disappointment at what they see to be his continuing exploitation of bankable international myths and stereotypes of Australia, and others populist dismay at what they interpret to be his disrespect for the Australian literary establishment that

played a formative role in acknowledging and supporting his work. While these accusations are not entirely groundless, they have been countered over the years—not always with the same degree of conviction—by being systematically incorporated into the body of Carey's work (Huddart 2008). Over more than three decades, Carey's fictions have established a continuum of concerns that routinely flirts with, though it falls short of officially announcing itself as, autobiography. The fickleness of fame and the politics of literary/artistic reputation; the 'generative power of mendacity' (Huggan, 1996 87); the marketing of style, partly as a function of the economic need to promote Australian national culture both at home and, especially, abroad—all of these have proved as central to Carey's continuously re-invented author-persona as they are to his insistently mythologised literary oeuvre.

These concerns all come together in Carey's 2006 novel *Theft: A Love Story*, to date probably his most tantalisingly autobiographical fictional work. It is perhaps inevitable that the foul-tempered Cubist painter Michael Boone (alias Butcher Bones), hailing as he does from Bacchus Marsh, would be seen by some as a heavily fictionalised stand-in for Carey; and that the more eagle-eyed might spot that an even more unpleasant minor character (alias 'The Plaintiff') bears what proved to be extremely unwelcome resemblances to Alison Summers, Carey's unhappily divorced ex-wife (Goldenberg 2008). (Unsurprisingly, Carey has denied this, claiming the absolute power of artistic licence, but the 'real-life' connections have stuck, the point being not how accurate they are but how powerfully they work on the imagination, creating parallel authenticities that are none the less compelling for the author's assurance that they are utterly fake.)[5]

All of this, as I've just said, is well-trodden Carey territory; what is new is the novel's satirical examination of the tangled cultural and economic relationships between domestic (Australian) and foreign (American, European and Japanese) art worlds at a time—the 1970s and 80s—when Australian art, while still enjoying a degree of national autonomy as a result of sustained state sponsorship, was increasingly copying the American cultural and financial models that would provide a basis for its acceptance as a sought-after investment commodity in a globalised world (van den Bosch 2005). It would be easy enough to read *Theft* as a melodramatic rant, led by the almost hysterically combative Butcher Bones, at the global processes by which artist, art world and market have converged under ruthlessly competitive circumstances, and with consequences potentially as devastating for those who are deemed to be successful as for those who are summarily dismissed as being out of style or out of date.[6] Even when his 'foreign' lover/agent Marlene manages to get him a prestigious show in Tokyo, Butcher is caustic, clashing with the detective, Amberstreet, who is suspicious—with what eventually turns out to be good reason—of the underlying motives for his work:

> If you are an American [which is what Marlene initially claims to be, though Butcher later finds out she is Australian] you will never understand what it is to be an artist at the edge of the world, to be thirty-six years old and to get an ad in *Studio International*. And no, it is in no way like being from Lubbock, Texas, or Grand Forks, North Dakota. If you are Australian you are free to argue that this cringing shit had disappeared by 1981, that history does not count, and that, in any case, we were soon to become the centre of the fucking universe, the flavour of the month, the coalition of the willing, etc., but I will tell you, frankly, nothing like this had been conceivable in my lifetime […] Do you understand? (Carey, 2006 144)

The rant, however, is characteristically disingenuous. For one thing, as David Huddart points out, Butcher's commentary effectively plays up the provincialism it claims to contest, further essentialising it as an 'Australian problem' (Huddart, 2008 9); for another, it almost comically underestimates the complexity of the relationships—social, cultural, economic—that link the putatively 'American' to the 'Australian' art worlds. While we shouldn't expect detailed analysis from Butcher (though we do get it from his 'damaged' brother Hugh, whose fragmented commentaries, alternating with the ostensibly more articulate Butcher's, are far more perceptive and self-aware than his), we can certainly read between the lines to get a sense of what Carey calls the 'collision' of the Australian (Sydney) and American (New York) art worlds that informs both the individual shenanigans of the characters and the larger, dangerously duplicitous desires and ambitions that drive the text (Carey, 2006 Acknowledgements Page). Beyond this, we might also catch a hint of Carey's critique of the emergence of a particular strand of Australian cultural nationalism ostensibly opposed to the commercialism of American culture and yet dependent on American financial muscle, one historical equivalent in the novel being the 'international superstar syndrome' that demands of local (Australian) artists that they participate in a global (Americanised) art world (van den Bosch, 2005 212, 175). Finally, we might go beyond *this* to locate a further level of critique whereby Carey suggests to us that, while it is certainly useful to account for the influence of globalisation processes on the contemporary art market, that market itself is not necessarily global; rather, it is 'concentrated in the major financial centres [New York, London, Tokyo] of the developed world' (van den Bosch, 2005 8). In this last sense, the reduction of these processes to the connections between 'national' and 'global' markets is a further instance of globaloney in so far as it overlooks the specificity and complexity of the cultural and market relations around art that have historically developed in and across different regions of the world.

The most obvious instance of globaloney in the novel, however, resides not in Butcher's localised attack on the snobbery and opportunism of a global art world but in the residual cultural nationalism that drives it, fuelling such stock expressions of cultural insecurity as: 'Why is it when an Australian does well outside the country everyone thinks it is a scam?' (Carey, 2006 147). Carey's satirical take on the Cringe seems here, as so often in his novels, to rely on ventriloquising the cultural-nationalist attitudes from which it seeks to distance itself; or, as David Huddart puts it, 'the opposite of [cringing] is hardly the finding of a "genuine" Australian culture (a [national] "voice") at all' (Huddart, 2008 11). As Huddart suggests, Carey is a mimic, continually undermining the 'authentic' discourses through which his fictions are presented to us, and positing instead 'the power and paradoxical originality of [literary/artistic imitations and] fakes' (15). There are several different ways of reading this. One way would be to emphasise the constructedness of different categories of authenticity and to show how such categories are easily manipulated, often in the less-than-honest interests of commercial enterprise or personal gain (Huddart 2008; Takolander & McCooey 2004). Another way would be to use Carey's advertising background to reflect on the magical power of the brand name and the image in his fictions, often mediated through (would-be) celebrity figures whose success has more to do with the extent to which their image can be commercially replicated than with the public impact of their exploits or the original quality of their work (Huggan 1996; Turner *et al* 2000). Still another would be to look, as Graeme Turner first suggested more than ten years ago, at the different ways in which Carey has 'deliberately intervened in the construction of his personal fame',

positioning himself as a 'national author' in such a way as to suggest that 'his novels are [by no means] his only fictions' (Turner, 1993 134, qtd in Takolander and McCooey, 2004 61). It is one of the ironies of celebrity that Carey's self-construction as national author has proved to be more successful on the global market than in Australia, although this argument would need to be countered by the *import*, as well as *export*, value of Australia in Carey's novels: their ability to anticipate the global processes by which commodified national images are sold back to the nation itself (Turner 1994). The verb 'anticipate' perhaps suggests that there is a clear historical trajectory by which Carey has eventually emerged as a global national author, with expatriation as the turning moment; but this too is a kind of globaloney, overlooking both the transnational circuits within which even his earliest fiction was disseminated and the persistent (one might even say obsessive) imbrication of global and national issues in his work.

All of this suggests that to label Carey as either 'global' or 'national', or even both, may ultimately be as fruitless as to chastise him for being an ungrateful expatriate; what seems more important is to tap into the specific transnational circuits that help produce effects of celebrity *in* and *on* his work. While it would be deluded to imagine that the globalisation of the Australian book trade has had no effect on the way Carey's national work and/or international persona are marketed, it would be equally misguided to see him as a special case. Indeed, it is the exceptionalist strain that sometimes accompanies labels such as 'global'—or, more obviously, 'global celebrity'—author that Carey himself has been keen to question, e. g. in the parody of centre-periphery relations that informs his recent 'artist novels' (notably *Theft* and *My Life as a Fake*). Unlike Greer, however, Carey has little interest either in promulgating a redemptive form of long-distance (expatriate) nationalism; even in his much-criticised travelogue on Sydney, Carey is partly ironic of his own nostalgic sympathies, while the provincialist anti-provincialism of Butcher Bones in *Theft* is unappealing and, like several of the paintings he handles, almost certainly false.

To return, then, to the dilemma with which I began: where does this leave Australian literature? Certainly not enslaved, as Susan Lever suggests, to the global 'cult of personality' (Lever 1993)—my last instance of globaloney—and not beholden either to the kind of media hype that gleefully battens onto marketable clichés such as 'Australian literature is dead'. Both 'here' and 'there', as perhaps it has always been, circulating in and across a number of transnational culture industries that may require, as Gayatri Spivak (1999) asserts, new forms of 'transnational literacy' to understand them; and certainly a heightened materialist understanding of how literature functions differently in different places and is turned to any number of different uses and political ends (Turner 1999). Perhaps 'transnational'—though certainly not without mystifications of its own—is the term best equipped to account for current developments in Australian literature. Perhaps 'global'—though certainly not to be dismissed—is less useful than it appears. Perhaps what is clearest is just this: Australian literature isn't *everywhere* (how could it be?) but a sizeable part of it is *elsewhere* than Australia, and this particular recognition of its dispersal, which should at least provide some kind of safeguard against perceptions of its diminishment, can only be to the good.

NOTES

[1] See, however, Davis 2008, for an interesting corrective to his earlier argument in which he sees small publishers as playing a different role in the national culture. My thanks to Wenche Ommundsen for pointing out Davis's more recent essay and for making other helpful comments on the manuscript.
[2] For differing views on the transnationalism of Australian literature, see Carter 1999; Dixon 2007; Huggan 2007; Whitlock 1999. In Dixon's essay, in particular, a concerted attempt is made to match the transnational dimensions of Australian literature with a transnational critical practice based on an historical understanding of the 'long-established relation between Australian [literary] careers and transnational cultures' (23)—a relation never more relevant than in the present day. The 'transnational' has sometimes been praised by Australian cultural critics at the expense of the 'global': see, for example, Muecke 2007: 'While the global is hegemonic, Northern, homogenising, centring and exploitative, the transnational is supposed to be more democratic, regional, diverse, hybrid, border-crossing and participatory' (48). While the qualifier 'is supposed to' suggests that Muecke is well aware of the pitfalls of this celebratory view of transnationalism, he—like several other contemporary Australian cultural commentators—seems to favour it as a means of maintaining Australian cultural distinctiveness while acknowledging that Australia has always been embedded in a set of (global?) cultural and historical contexts that link it to the wider world.
[3] On uses and abuses of the figure of the 'global reader', more a metaphor than a reality, see Huggan 2001 and, especially, Brouillette 2007. For the applicability (or not) of this metaphor to Australian literature, see also Nile 2002.
[4] A recent case in point is the work of Robert Dixon, who tendentiously distinguishes between 'weak' and 'strong' versions of the internationalisation of Australian literature, with the work of non-Australian-based Australianists (several of whom, of course, are non-Australian) being implicitly classified as 'weak' while the 'strong' version consists of the embedding of the national literature in readerships and intellectual agendas that go well beyond national boundaries—a task apparently best left to Australian-based critics, whose current task is not to link with offshore Australian studies centres but to consolidate 'links between Australian literature and mainstream work in English today' (2007 21).
[5] On the play of competing authenticities in Carey's work, see Huddart 2008; also Huggan 2002.
[6] See the work of Robert Morgan, who bitterly complains in his 1998 book *The End of the Art World* that the contemporary art world is now in thrall to global market forces that 'stand in the way not only of discriminating what is significant in art from what is not, but also in the way of offering us a heightened sensory awareness of art as an expression of individual thought and feeling within a new global, and potentially intercultural, situation' (1). For a more measured view of the relation between the art world and the art market, see Crane *et al* 2002 and, in the Australian context, van den Bosch 2005.

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