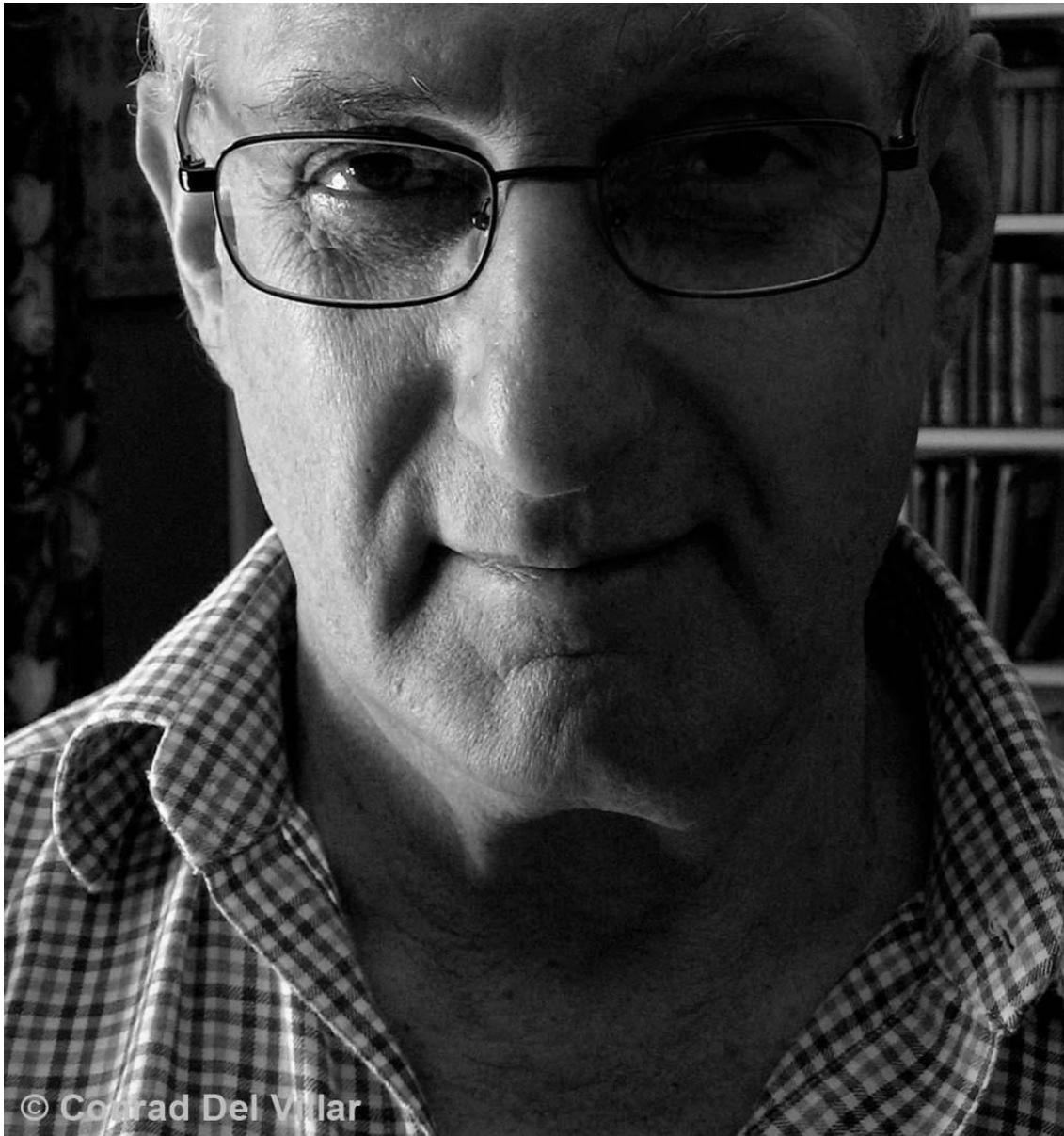


THE DAVID MALOUF SYMPOSIUM

Program and Abstracts



**A Faculty of Arts & Sciences event, in conjunction with The Association for
the Study of Australian Literature in honour of David Malouf AO**

31 May 2013

**Australian Catholic University
40 Edward Street, North Sydney**

DAVID MALOUF

David Malouf is one of Australia's most celebrated writers. He was born in Brisbane on 20 March 1934 and grew up in South Brisbane: his childhood home is immortalised in the memoir *12 Edmondstone Street*. He was educated at Brisbane Grammar School and graduated from the University of Queensland with a BA (Hons) in English in 1954. From 1955-57 he lectured at the University of Queensland, before travelling to England in 1959 where he worked as a teacher: between 1962-68 he was English Master at St Anselm's College, Birkenhead. On his return to Australia, he took up an appointment as senior tutor/lecturer with the English Department at the University of Sydney (1968 – 77). By the time he retired from the University of Sydney he was well established as a prize-winning poet and fiction writer. In 1978 he was awarded a three year Writer's Fellowship from the Literature Board of the Australia Council. For many years he divided his time between Italy and in Sydney, devoting himself to writing full-time. His work, which covers a wide range of genres – poetry, short fiction, novels, memoirs, essays, libretti, music theatre and a play – is celebrated by readers around the world. He is the subject of a copious number of critical and biographical articles, books and films.

David has served on the Literature Board (1973-75) and the Australian Opera Board (2001-09), he is a Life Member of Sydney PEN and, since 2008, has been an ambassador for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation. He has an on-going involvement with Australian Catholic University, engaging with Australian Literature students on the Strathfield campus each year for the last decade, as well as with socially disadvantaged students who are part of the Clemente Australia program.

David lives in Sydney and continues to address Australian culture and society, 'to envision Australia', as Don Randall says, 'in ways that make it habitable, a place of meaningful, self-sustaining community' (Don Randall, *David Malouf*, 2007).

Awards

Order of Australia, Officer in the Order of Australia (AO), 1987
Geraldine Pascall Prize for Fiction, 1988
Australian Academy of the Humanities, Honorary Fellow, elected 1989
D.Litt (honoris causa), Macquarie University, 1991
D.Litt (honoris causa), University of Queensland, 1992
Australian Living National Treasure, 1997
D.Litt (honoris causa), University of Sydney, 1998
Lannan Foundation Literary Awards, Fiction, 2000
Neustadt International Prize for Literature, 16th Laureate, 2000
Friends of the National Library of Australia Celebration Award, 2001
Queensland Greats Award, 2003
Centenary Medal, 2003
Lloyd O'Neil Award for Services to the Australian Book Industry, 2008

Publications and major prizes

Four Poets: David Malouf, Don Maynard, Judith Green and Rodney Hall, 1962

Bicycle and Other Poems, 1970

Neighbours in a Thicket (poetry), 1974 (winner Townsville Foundation for Australian Literary Studies Award 1974; Australian Literature Society Gold Medal 1974; Grace Leven Poetry Prize 1974)

Johnno (fiction), 1975 (joint winner One Book One Brisbane 2004)

Poems 1975-76, 1976

An Imaginary Life (fiction), 1978 (winner NSW Premier's Literary Awards [fiction] 1979)

First Things Last (poetry), 1980

Wild Lemons (poetry), 1980

Selected Poems, 1981

Child's Play (fiction), 1982 (joint winner Australian Literature Society Gold Medal 1983)

Fly Away Peter (fiction), 1982 (winner *The Age* Book of the Year Award [Book of the Year] 1982; *The Age* Book of the Year Award [imaginative writing] 1982; joint winner Australian Literature Society Gold Medal 1983)

Harland's Half Acre (fiction), 1984, 2013

Antipodes (fiction) 1985, (winner Victorian Premier's Literary Awards [fiction] 1985)

12 Edmondstone Street (memoir), 1985

Voss: an opera in two acts (libretto), 1986

Blood Relations (play) 1987, (winner NSW Premier's Literary Awards [play] 1987)

The Great World (fiction) 1990, (winner Miles Franklin Literary Award 1991; Commonwealth Writers Prize Overall Best Book Award 1991; Commonwealth Writers Prize S-E Asia and South Pacific Region Best Book from Region 1991; Prix Femina [France] Best Foreign Novel 1991; SA Festival Awards for Literature [fiction] 1992)

Selected Poems, 1991

Mer de Glace (libretto), 1991

Poems 1959-89, 1992

Remembering Babylon (fiction), 1993 (winner NSW State Literary Award [fiction] 1993; *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize [best novel] 1994; Commonwealth Writers Prize S-E Asia and the South Pacific Region Best Book from the Region 1994; Prix Baudelaire [France] 1995; inaugural International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award 1996)

Baa Baa Black Sheep: a jungle tale (libretto), 1993

The Conversations at Curlow Creek (fiction), 1996

Boyer Lectures 1998: A Spirit of Play: the making of Australian Consciousness, 1998

Untold Tales (stories), 1999

Dream Stuff (fiction), 2000

Made in England: Australia's British Inheritance (essay), 2003

Jane Eyre (libretto), 2005

Every Move You Make (fiction), 2006 (winner *The Age* Book of the Year Award [fiction] 2007; Queensland Premier's Literary Award [short story] 2007)

Guide to the Perplexed and Other Poems, 2007

Typewriter Music (poetry), 2007 (winner Queensland Premier's Literary Award [poetry] 2008)

The Complete Stories (fiction) 2007 (winner inaugural Australia-Asia Literary Award 2008)

Revolving Days: Selected poems, 2008

On Experience (essay), 2008

Ransom (fiction), 2009 (winner John D Criticos Prize 2010; Australian Literature Society Gold Medal 2010; SA Festival Awards for Literature [fiction] 2010)
The Happy Life: the search of contentment in the modern world (essay), 2011

Some books about David Malouf and his writing

Hansson, Karin *Sheer Edge: Aspects of Identity in David Malouf's Writing*, 1991
Heinke, Jorg *Die Konstruktion des Fremden in den Romanen von David Malouf* (The Construction of Strangeness in the Novels of David Malouf), 2005
Indyk, Ivor *David Malouf*, 1993
Indyk, Ivor (ed.) *David Malouf: A Celebration*, 2001
Nielsen, Philip *Imagined Lives: A Study of David Malouf*, 1990, 1996
Nettlebeck, Amanda (ed.) *Provisional Maps: Critical Essays on David Malouf*, 1994
Randall, Don *David Malouf*, 2007
Tulip, James (ed.) *David Malouf: Johnno, Short Stories, Poems, Essays and Interview*, 1990
World Literature Today vol 74, No. 4, Autumn 2000 'David Malouf: 16th Laureate of the Neustadt International Prize for Literature' <http://www.jstor.org/stable/i40003973>

Senior School and Undergraduate Guides

Keaney, Leonie *David Malouf's Fly Away Peter*, 1998
McRoberts, Richard *A Student's Guide to Fly Away Peter by David Malouf*, 1991
Mancini, Anne *Focus on Fly Away Peter by David Malouf*, 1991
Maxwell, Joan *David Malouf's Remembering Babylon*, 1995
Nettlebeck, Amanda *Reading David Malouf*, 1995
Perry, Susan *A Student's Guide to An Imaginary Life by David Malouf*, 1991
Smith, Yvonne, *David Malouf's Ransom: Text Guide*, 2011

An extensive list of works by and about David Malouf is available on the AustLit data base, <http://www.austlit.edu.au/>

THE DAVID MALOUF SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

8:45 **Registration/coffee**

Session One: chair Elaine Lindsay

- 9:15 Welcome to ACU and Acknowledgement of Country, Marea Nicholson, Associate Vice-Chancellor (Sydney)
Welcome to participants, Gail Crossley, Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts & Sciences
Michael Griffith, Associate Professor, Literature & Language
Bernadette Brennan, President, Association for the Study of Australian Literature
- 9:35 – 10:00 Ihab Hassan, *David Malouf: Approaching Eighty* (read by Michael Griffith)
- 10:00 – 10:30 Nicholas Jose, *Metamorphic Malouf*

10:30 – 11:00 **Morning tea in foyer**

Session Two: chair Bernadette Brennan

- 11:00 – 11:30 Stephen Mansfield, *'He had an inner life that was not declared': Patrimony in David Malouf's* 12 Edmondstone Street
- 11:30 -12:00 Brigid Rooney, *Lost Objects: Time, Suburb and Self in David Malouf's* Johnno
- 12:00 – 12:30 Damien Barlow, *'As if my bones had changed into clouds': Queer Epiphanies in David Malouf's Fiction*

12:30 – 1:15 **Lunch in foyer**

Session Three: chair Michael Griffith

- 1:15 – 1:45 Colm Tóibín on Skype with Michael Griffith
- 1:45 – 2:15 James Marland, *'A sort of buzzing': Queer Sound in David Malouf's Blood Relations*
- 2:15 – 2:45 Kate Matthew, *Priam and the Pikelets: Ransoming The Iliad*

2:45 – 3:15 **Afternoon tea in foyer**

Session Four: chair Elaine Lindsay

- 3:15 – 3:45 Yvonne Smith, *David Malouf: The Long Breath of the Young Writer*
- 3:45 – 4:15 James Tulip, *First Things Last: David Malouf's Commitment to Poetry*
- 4:15 – 4:30 David Malouf reading
- 4:30 – 5:30 David Malouf and Ivor Indyk in conversation, general discussion and close

Informal conviviality continues at The Living Room Food and Wine Bar, 36 Blue Street, North Sydney (opposite North Sydney Station), on the Greenwood Plaza Shopping Centre Rooftop.

IHAB HASSAN

David Malouf: Approaching Eighty

This text honors David Malouf, approaching his eightieth birthday, and wishes him many happy returns of the decade.

A timely text is mindful of the passing years but also of many things that grace our lives. Things like friendship, the friendship, in this case, of old age, when youth has lost its incandescence, and men and women walk side by side, less burdened by their illusions and needs.

I met David Malouf in the last week of the old millennium; he was sixty six; I was seventy five. Leave the personal affinities to chemistry. What's apposite here is that I recognized a great writer, first on reading him many years ago; and I recognized a remarkable human being, shortly after meeting him.

The alliance of high artistic achievement with charm, humor, and probity is among the rarest of gifts. Who had it? Chekhov, Kafka, Beckett (whose charm was austere)? I don't speak of saintliness; I speak of a life seriously lived, both in and out of art, and also of a certain ease, a certain lightness of being in the world. For there's no ponderousness in Malouf—all that heaviness that comes with ego, all that vain weight—there's only dignity.

The first book I read by David Malouf was *An Imaginary Life*, and I've never felt closer to a novel since my teens. That's another way of saying that I wished I could have written that book. I reread it continually, as millions do, to rediscover myself in that exile we all suffer as we wander in our own Dacias, alone in the vast, unspeakable scheme of things.

As to our first real-life meeting—isn't art real?—it took place at the swank Rockpool Restaurant. My wife, Sally Hassan, and I had arrived early. David arrived punctually, stood erect at the door surveying the room, and proceeded to our table—following his writer's instinct—without help from the staff. Since then, our conversation has never flagged. Since then, Sally's and my interest in all things Australian has continued to accrue.

*

Still, it would be bumptious of me to speak to this audience about the signal importance of David Malouf as an Australian writer: you know all the books and interviews; you know the prizes, the portraits, and the burnished brass plaques. But why think of him only as an Australian writer? His prizes are international; his books are read in many languages. I did not pick up *An Imaginary Life* because its author's name sounded Middle Eastern, and I didn't put it back on the shelf because his first name was Christian rather than Muslim.

Consider how Malouf deals with his native Brisbane in the essay called 'A First Place'. This piece pushes out from a child's body—hiding sometimes beneath the floor planks of the house—touches the walls and roof, and moves out toward the hilly city, carved sinuously by its disorienting river, out toward the hoop-pines in the distance, then farther out still, toward the horizon of human awareness. This particular first place—a first place, mind you, not the Garden of Eden—is nonetheless the place from which a writer's imagination begins to expand till it encompasses the whole shebang.

As Malouf stretches out to take in Brisbane, we encounter all the universal elements of our own lives: inner and outer space, alienation and intimacy, the secrets of identity, the mysteries of sexuality, and language, always language—all emanating from ‘a landscape and its houses’. Thus, in a child’s itinerary, from physical sensations to maps of reality, we read the artistic journey.

Isn’t this journey also a parable of the local aspiring to the global in art, of a child-like intuition growing into a world literature?

Malouf’s parable, however, honors the cracks in creation, all the differences of human kind. ‘It might be time,’ he suggests, ‘to forget likeness and look closely at the many varieties of difference we now exhibit, to let notions of what is typically Australian lapse for a time....’ This was written back in 1985, when most of us were cutting our teeth on multiculturalism.

We know the consummate ability of the artist to touch the nerve of individuals and at the same time to engage the ethos of an age. But we sometimes forget that this ability inheres to language itself. (Neurologically, a baby starts as a citizen of the world until a particular language begins to speak him or her.) Malouf’s brief story, ‘The Only Speaker of His Tongue’, helps us to perceive the point.

In the story, a Norwegian lexicographer meditates on the plight of an Aboriginal laborer, who is the last speaker of his language group. With this particular man’s death, dies not only a system of sounds; a whole portion of reality will also disappear, a whole history and segment of time. Here is how the narrator puts it:

It is a mystery of the deep past [this death of a language], but also of now. We recapture on our tongue, when we first grasp the sound and make it, the same word in the mouths of our long dead fathers.... Language is [their] blood.

To speak, then, is to address times past and times present, and to address the wide world. But only an artist—an artist like Malouf—knows how to speak without fumbling or stuttering, without uttering uncouth sounds that only members of the same horde, huddling around a dying fire, can understand.

*

But we mustn’t permit abstractions to cloud our view of a writer like David Malouf: his works speak to us about large things in the ‘dirt of private fact’, as William James would say, and in the nooks of history.

Consider now a curiously neglected work, *Child’s Play*, a novelette set in Italy and faithful to its squalid facts. Throughout the story, you hear echoes and reverberations of the unfortunate Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, murdered in the late seventies by the Red Brigade. Yet the work transcends its occasion; its appeal is as unbounded as Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* or Mann’s *Death in Venice*; and its artistry suffers nothing from the comparison.

The title tips us off: can the terrorist obey the logic of a child at play rather than the constraints of a religious or political fanatic? Can he escape self-delusion, self-corruption? The answer is complex.

Narrated in the first person—hence sympathetically—by a young terrorist, the story takes us through wonderfully rendered details to a fatal moment, the assassination of a preeminent man of letters, simply called the Master. This act, though, is not merely political, which is to say local; it is spiritual as well, hence universal. For behind the outrageous deed lies the dream of absolute freedom, transgressing all limits, including death. As the child at play suspends reality, so does the terrorist annihilate it in his deadly game.

*

There's much more to say about this uncanny novella, but we need to focus on our theme: I mean David Malouf, at home in Australia and the world. (Yes, the world: once, my wife and I were strolling with him in Lucca, a small town in Tuscany, when an Australian tourist spotted him and cried out happily, 'David Malouf!'; the author smiled without breaking his stride.) Indeed, though he is an Australian author of Lebanese extraction—no doubt, he has set the pace for writers in the Antipodes—Malouf also serves as a measure of literary value everywhere.

Here I can adduce but one example. In the English-speaking world, in America especially, pop culture has invaded all the arts, packed in bits and bytes. This fact need not signal catastrophe: high art has always refreshed itself at the sources of popular culture. But the trend seems to have helped to trivialize the idea of literature itself. How so?

A genre has popped on the scene that could be called the Look-Ma-No-Hands-School-of-Writing, nurtured lovingly by MFA Programs from sea to shining sea. It is bright, jivy, whacko, wonky, snarky, and suicidally inventive. It's also cozy with pop, especially movies, rock, TV, and digital games; beyond 'cool', it aspires to be 'awesome'. In this genre, good writing is mainly conceived as the effort to escape, Houdini-like, from a Mosler safe, bound by tungsten chains, crouching between a lesbian vampire and an autistic werewolf. The genre reverts, 'sort of', to the sad and hugely gifted David Foster Wallace, and counts several writers of indisputable talent among its practitioners. But is that writing truly great?

Enter—or, rather, exit—David Malouf, who will have none of it.

Instead of high jinx, he offers grace and intelligence and craft. He gives us the gleams and tremors of existence, and the impression of knowing the intricacies of the heart. He parades an array of characters whose emotions have not been worn smooth with triteness. Above all, he offers the quality of original and indelible humanity, which I am at a loss to define. Is it to do with love, hope, and charity, to misquote Corinthians? Does it spring from some childlike innocence that would bring a smile to the lips of William Blake? Or does it draw on some ancient poetic power, fit for this time and all times?

*

I approach the end of my remarks. With poetry Malouf began, to poetry he has returned without ransoming his fiction from all those who hold it dear. But then, wasn't his work radically poetic throughout and from the start? We need to give the last word to the poet; for his most recent poems are as strong and troubling as any he has written. Easily, almost in an off-handed way, they reach for the core of silence, deep layers of experience, attainable only by a distinctive, sometimes broken, music of words. Here's an unpublished poem, titled 'Aquarius'.

Aquarius

Swimming through space
this morning with the light of the Pacific
on three walls and a feathery

pink in the sky as of an angel
event. Time that can be
the devil on occasions,

in weather such as this seems bountiful, pure
gift with nothing to pay, one breath
then the next freely delivered—at least for now

and here. Elsewhere the world
kindles and quakes, women bear
on their heads a hodful of it

from one side to the other of the globe, children cram
their belly with its mud,
in a lakeside wood

anemones feel their way out of the dark
and the first four downward
notes of K.451 take a second breath and swing

companionably upward—sheer miracle
or happy accident, one, like us,
of many. With a quiet thank you to the planet

for snow, hoop-pines, Mozart,
and you of course, and you, I leave the room
to its play, sacred perhaps, with salt and sun-motes.

Content, now the little drummer has made his ado, and fax
and fiddle have had their say, to call it
a night, call it a day.

ABSTRACTS

Damien Barlow

'As if my bones had changed into clouds': Queer Epiphanies in David Malouf's Fiction

From his earliest work to his most recent, David Malouf's oeuvre has consistently employed epiphanies to the point where such moments of heightened sensation, personal enlightenment or deep realisation and wonderment have become a defining hallmark of his writing. Focusing on Malouf's early novels (*Johnno*, *An Imaginary Life* and *Fly Away Peter*) and his short fiction ('Closer', 'Southern Skies' and 'Night Training'), this paper critically examines his use of epiphanies from a queer theoretical framework. As Nikki Sullivan argues queer theories aim 'to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimise, to camp up – heteronormative knowledges and institutions, and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them'. Or put more simply by Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird, queer theories attempt to 'undo normative entanglements and fashion alternative imaginaries'.

Building on the scholarship of Ivor Indyk, Leigh Dale and Helen Gilbert, among others, I argue that queer epiphanies in Malouf's fiction provide ways to not only articulate but also obfuscate same-sex desires and identities. This double movement is most pronounced when Malouf explores epiphanic moments of same-sex love and experiences between men and/or boys. However, they also offer more ambiguous and decentred viewpoints, as in the relationship between the nine-year-old Pentecostal narrator Amy and her outcast gay Uncle Charles in the short story 'Closer'.

Nicholas Jose

Metamorphic Malouf

David Malouf's work is notable for the range of genres it encompasses (including poem, novel, novella, short story, essay, memoir, play, libretto, translation, review). It is also notable for its transgeneric quality: parts of his fiction approach autobiography or the essay; his essays range from personal memory and travel to social and cultural commentary, and beyond; his fiction is historical, fabulist, naturalistic and poetic in turn. Some of his works adapt existing works into another form: novel to opera: Greek or Latin into English. One of his most celebrated works, *An Imaginary Life*, recreates the life of the poet of *Metamorphoses*. The metamorphic quality or interest or theme reappears throughout Malouf's writing. Yet Malouf himself has spoken often of an author's 'body of work', and the way each new part both extends and recasts what has gone before, but also adds to it coherently, as if that body of work is one evolving thing—rather than something made up of many separate, distinct parts. In other words, the change from one thing to another (one form, one mode, one kind) does not seem to change a pervasive unity (underlying, overarching). This is a paradox of the one and the many as they relate artistically and conceptually to each other, and the mystery that the paper will address. It hopes to illuminate through this line of inquiry some of the characteristics that make David Malouf different from other Australian writers, and different as an Australian writer in international contexts.

Stephen Mansfield

'He had an inner life that was not declared': Patrimony in David Malouf's 12 Edmondstone Street

Much has been written about David Malouf and his father, and by extension, Malouf and masculinity. In her essay, 'The Child in the (Queensland) House: David Malouf and Regional Writing', Gillian Whitlock observes that *12 Edmondstone Street* is an exploration of 'that drive to autonomy

and mastery which defines masculine individuation'. But how does Malouf's own masculine individuation relate to his rejection of his father's model of masculinity? To what extent is this drive to autonomy and mastery adopted or discarded by Malouf's 'autobiographical persona' in his text?

In this paper I revisit the question of patrimony in Malouf's oeuvre by returning to his representation of the father in *12 Edmondstone Street*. I investigate notions of interiority and exteriority in Malouf's constructions of fathers and sons, and draw comparisons with other Australian autobiographical essayists who have written about fathers, including John Hughes and Gerald Murnane. I also analyse how the model of reticent-laconic masculinity in *12 Edmondstone Street* is repeated and recast in Malouf's fiction, drawing this thread as far back as *Johnno* and as far forward as *Ransom*.

James Marland

'A sort of buzzing': Queer Sound in David Malouf's Blood Relations

David Malouf's stage play *Blood Relations* is an Australian re-telling of Shakespeare's comedy *The Tempest*. The play problematises the relationship between the European settlers and the landscape as well as exposing their impact on the country's Indigenous inhabitants. The protagonist of the play, Willy, is a Greek citizen who has landed, Prospero-like, on an island off the coast of North-Western Australia; he shows little respect for the original inhabitants, allowing Malouf to explore postcolonial dilemmas from an Australian perspective. A number of scholars have recognised the postcolonial discourse embedded in the play and Malouf's oeuvre in general (Gilbert; Dever; Attar; and Randall). Apart from Malouf's postcolonial focus, critics have identified other postmodern elements of his work including his conflation of topography and the human body (Dale and Gilbert; Leer; and Hassan); his complication of space and its meaning (Haskell; and Dever); his exploration of language (Kavanagh; and Mansfield); and the sexual complexity of his various characters (Kirby). This paper expands on the postmodern discussion of Malouf's work by examining his use of stage sound in *Blood Relations* through a queer lens.

Literature may be deemed queer, Teresa de Lauretis argues, when it 'not only works against narrativity, the generic pressure of all narrative toward closure and the fulfilment of meaning, but also pointedly disrupts the referentiality of language and the referentiality of images'. *Blood Relations* presents two characters who share the awareness of an identical, yet internalised, psychic sound that exposes dysfunctional heteronormative family relationships. The sound, described by the character Edward as 'as sort of buzzing', is the conduit for his discovery of the murder / suicide of his family. This queer buzzing may be seen in the play as representative of dreamscapes, isolation and altered consciousness - the antithesis of closure.

Kate Matthew

Priam and the Pikelets: Ransoming The Iliad

Historians remain conflicted about the reinterpretation of history through fiction. Is it a travesty – art's parody of history's reality? Or is it an alternative pathway to historical truth? The Kate Grenville 'scandal' of 2005/2006 introduced a wider audience to the various aspects of this debate, eloquently advanced by Hayden White (among others) and rendered more accessible in Ann Curthoys' and John Docker's provocatively titled *Is History Fiction?* The essence of the conundrum is whether history is served or subverted by fictional retelling. While artists like Grenville and David Malouf are comfortable with the demarcations between history and fiction, historians are often far less comfortable. Regardless of comfort level, Malouf's *Ransom* opens the door into an ancient

story for a modern audience. The novel provides new perspective on three of the major characters in the *Iliad* story: King Priam, Achilles and the humble inhabitant of Troy (the cart driver) become human to a modern reader, in a way that the Ancient Greek tales cannot be. Malouf's work, therefore, becomes important as an entrée into the hallowed halls of Greek heroic poetry. However, as it was written in response to the experience of war in the twentieth century, *Ransom* also speaks to the contextualisation of more modern war-time experience, and its lingering effects, by an educated thinker. This paper explores the nexus between history and fiction and examines the value of fictional re-telling in making history accessible to non-academic audiences.

Brigid Rooney

Lost objects: time, suburb and self in David Malouf's Johnno

David Malouf's novel *Johnno* (1975) is a classic within Australian literary culture. With its vivid evocation of an older, now vanished Brisbane in the period during and after the Second World War, it has been an especially iconic text for Queenslanders, marking a threshold moment not only in Malouf's own career but also in the emergence of Australian writing as not just national but also local, regional and transnational in its orientations and travelling. In its encoding of Malouf's autobiographical experience in a remembered time and place, *Johnno* is more subtle and intricate than may appear from a first or single encounter, as many of its readers and critics already know. Indeed *Johnno* works on multiple levels, including in the ways in which it plays between fiction and fact, between real and imagined. Returning to *Johnno* in my own teaching and research on Australian fictions of suburbia, I have been surprised by the persistence of a particular strand of criticism of Malouf's novel. In this criticism, *Johnno* is noted for its propagation of a brand of anti-suburbanism linked to – or inherited from – the well-known anti-suburban polemic of the 1950s and 1960s, a polemic that continues in new guises even today. It is true that 'anti-suburbanism' is a recurring motif in *Johnno*. Yet all is not as it seems. In this paper, I will read *Johnno* with and against its ostensible anti-suburbanism. Tracing the turns of Malouf's narration, his uses of time, place and memory, and his creation of imagined, fictional interiors that diverge from – in order to address – external public reality, I will speculate on what this means for thinking about the role of the suburb as both a modernizing and mediating zone in Australian fiction.

Yvonne Smith

David Malouf: The Long Breath of the Young Writer

This paper offers a reading of Malouf's earliest published works as a young writer in the 1940s and 1950s and suggest that three themes they explore – a frustrated search for happiness, the hero as passionate outsider, the essential yet conflicted influence of family life – resonate across his mature works in a way that is specific to his Australian context but also evidence of his wider, universalist vision.

There has been, to date, no published discussion of his juvenilia, nor a biography of his early years beyond his own autobiographical *12 Edmondstone Street* and his parent-focused essay 'As Happy as This'. This paper seeks to encourage further research and critical consideration of this early period which has great importance for his later work.

Specifically, the paper focuses on three short stories that appeared in Brisbane Grammar School's *The School Window* in 1948 when Malouf was fourteen years old, one of which was awarded his first literary prize. His work will be considered in the context of his immigrant family background, his habits of reading and film going, and the challenges of a society coping with global conflicts and

economic depression. Two further short stories published in the student journal *Semper Floreat* from his university years in the 1950s show how his interests shift from adolescence into early adulthood as an intense, emotive literary imaginary becomes more concise and subtle under the influence of writers such as Ernest Hemingway and poets such as Kenneth Slessor, W.H. Auden, Wallace Stevens and Rainer Maria Rilke.

The themes noted in these early stories are traced briefly across his mature works and related particularly to the recently revised edition of *Harland's Half Acre*, published in February 2013. That Malouf is still creatively engaged with this novel three decades after its first publication suggests that its concerns – a quest for happiness, for family identity and for the artist's role in society – remain central to his purposes as a writer.

James Tulip

First Things Last: David Malouf's commitment to poetry

The paper by addressing Malouf's early years as a published poet lays a basis for the claim that his achievement is essentially that of a poet, whether in verse or prose. It presents a survey of Malouf's early Sydney experiences and his first publications in books of poetry such as *Four Poets*, *Bicycle* and *Neighbours in a Thicket*.

David Malouf's return from his years in the UK and Europe in the later 1960s coincided with a deep change in Australian politics, culture and literature. It is best seen in the rise of Gough Whitlam in politics, but may more generally be understood as the ending of the post World War II phase of Australian history. Malouf was himself still finding his way in literary, intellectual and personal terms, but was admirably suited, and ready, to move with the times. His appointment to lecture in English literature at Sydney University in 1967 gave him the opportunity to find a base and a context where his gifts and talents could quickly take shape and flourish.

The poetry workshops held in these years in the Student Union, Parramatta Road, Sydney University, were an innovation where Malouf and Phillip Roberts (with my support) focussed on 'imitations', that let a large group of young poets tackle the classics in a new way. Several of the Latin texts that Malouf worked on are among his liveliest pieces of verse, and underlie his prose classics such as *An Imaginary Life* and *Ransom*.

Expanded versions of the papers given at this Symposium will be published in a 2014 issue of the *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (JASAL)* celebrating David Malouf's 80th birthday. JASAL can be read on line at <http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/jasal>.

Potential contributors to the publication are encouraged to contact Elaine Lindsay at MaloufSymposium@acu.edu.au using the subject header 'Malouf JASAL' and including a 250 word abstract and the author's name, affiliation, email address, title of abstract, body of abstract, and a short biography. Papers that place David Malouf's life and work in an international context, or address broad themes in his writing, the range of genres he employs, his relationship with the visual arts, music and theatre, or his influence on contemporary writers and culture will be particularly welcome, as will personal tributes and reminiscences.

Abstracts are due by 31 July 2013.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Damien Barlow is a lecturer in English based at the Albury-Wodonga Campus of La Trobe University. He has published widely on sexuality in Australian literature. D.Barlow@latrobe.edu.au

Bernadette Brennan is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Sydney, and current President of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (ASAL). She had the pleasure of writing her Honours thesis on David Malouf's poetry and prose and has remained a committed reader and teacher of Malouf's work ever since.

Michael Griffith is Associate Professor, Literature and Language at Australian Catholic University, Strathfield campus. He is author of *God's Fool: The Life and Poetry of Francis Webb* (1991); 2nd Revised eBook edition (2012). With James Tulip and Elaine Lindsay he was at the core of the Religion, Literature and the Arts group that emanated from Australian Catholic University in the 1990s. Michael.griffith@acu.edu.au

Ihab Hassan was born in Egypt and has lived and taught in America since 1946. He has visited Australia fifteen times, and some of his essays have appeared in *Best Australian Essays*, for 2000, 2001, 2002. Hassan has received two Guggenheim and three Fulbright Fellowships, and two honorary doctorates from the Universities of Uppsala and Giessen. He is the author of fifteen books of essays and memoirs, and of more than twenty short stories, published in such journals as *New England Review*, *Antioch Review*, *AGNI*, *New Ohio Review*, *Witness*, *Fiction International*, etc. He has just completed a novelette and stories with Egyptian backgrounds, *The Changeling and Other Stories*.

Ivor Indyk is the founding editor of *Heat* magazine and the Giramondo book imprint and Whitlam Professor in the Writing and Society Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney. A critic, essayist and reviewer, he has written a monograph on David Malouf for Oxford University Press and essays on many aspects of Australian literature, art, architecture and publishing. I.Indyk@uws.edu.au

Nicholas Jose has published seven novels, including *The Red Thread* (2000) and *Original Face* (2005), two collections of short stories, essays, art writing and a memoir. He was general editor of the *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature* (2009) and Visiting Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University, 2009-10. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Writing and Society Research Centre, University of Western Sydney, Visiting Professor at Bath Spa University, UK, and Professor of English and Creative Writing in the J M Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice at The University of Adelaide. nicholas.jose@adelaide.edu.au

Elaine Lindsay is Research Development Coordinator in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Australian Catholic University. She is the author of *Rewriting God: Spirituality in Contemporary Australian Women's Fiction* (2000) and co-editor of *Preachers, Prophets and Heretics: Anglican Women's Ministry* (2012). Elaine.lindsay@acu.edu.au

Stephen Mansfield received his doctorate from the University of Sydney in 2011. He has published essays on representations of patrimony and masculinity in *Life Writing* and *Antipodes*, as well as interviews with authors such as Peter Rose and John Hughes. He is the author of *Australian Patriography: How Sons Write Fathers in Contemporary Life Writing* (2013), which is published by Anthem Press. Stephen_a_mansfield@yahoo.com.au

James Marland is a lecturer in drama at Australian Catholic University, Strathfield campus. He completed his PhD at Sydney University in 2010 focussing on the intersection of theatre, religion and sexuality. James.Marland@acu.edu.au

Kate Matthew is a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney, researching nineteenth century politics. Other research interests include women's history and historiography. She is a freelance historian currently specialising in local history, and a sessional lecturer at Australian Catholic University in the areas of history, communications and the core units. Kate is on the editorial boards of *History in the Making* and *Circa*, and on the Heritage Advisory Committee for the Blue Mountains City Council. eclectichistory@gmail.com

Brigid Rooney is a senior lecturer in the Australian Literature Program at the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Literary Activists: Writer-Intellectuals and Australian Public Life* (2009) and is currently researching the nexus of the real and the imagined in fictions of suburbia. brigid.rooney@sydney.edu.au

Yvonne Smith is an independent scholar based in Sydney. The paper makes use of research for a book currently being written on Malouf's work and extends a doctoral thesis which was awarded the Eva Veronka Vidak Prize for 2009 in the Department of English at the University of Sydney. The generous assistance of David Malouf, including interviews and access to his personal library, has been a key factor in the research. yvonne.smith8@bigpond.com

Colm Tóibín is an Irish novelist, short story writer, essayist, playwright, journalist, critic and poet. He is currently Professor of Humanities at Columbia University and succeeded Martin Amis as Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Manchester.

James Tulip was formerly Associate Professor of English, University of Sydney, 1962 - 1997. He was once a fellow student with David Malouf at the University of Queensland. With Michael Griffith and Elaine Lindsay he was at the core of the Religion, Literature and the Arts group that emanated from Australian Catholic University in the 1990s. Tulip is the editor of *David Malouf: 'Johnno', Short Stories, Poems, Essays and interview*. tulipgold@bigpond.com

The Symposium co-organisers Michael Griffith and Elaine Lindsay thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in mounting this event: David Malouf, Ihab Hassan, Colm Tóibín, James Tulip (who suggested the Symposium in the first place) and the other speakers, the Association for the Study of Australian Literature (Bernadette Brennan and Tony Simoes Da Silva), Random House Australia (Meredith Curnow, Karen Reid), the Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts & Sciences (Gail Crossley and her staff), the Associate Vice-Chancellor [Sydney] (Marea Nicholson and her staff), and ACU's Marketing & External Relations.

Addressing the Sacred through Literature and the Arts Conference

Friday 2 – Saturday 3 August 2013

Australian Catholic University, 25A Barker Road, Strathfield

How do we express and interpret the sacred in works of art and literature? Can they provide an opening to sacred experience?

You are invited to join us for a conference exploring the interplay between the arts and the sacred, to be held on the Strathfield campus of ACU.

The conference, which features keynote speakers **Amanda Lohrey**, **Kevin Hart** and **Rosemary Crumlin RSM**, encourages dialogue between artists, writers and musicians, teachers, researchers and students, religious and audiences. The program will also include some 40 papers, workshops, panels and readings, and an art exhibition opening.

Post-graduate students are invited to participate in a seminar on 2 August with **Kevin Hart**, **Angela McCarthy** and **Tony Kelly**. The seminar will facilitate interdisciplinary discussion and networking for researchers around Australia in the arts, religion and spirituality.

Program and registration details are available on: <http://www.acu.edu.au/addressingthesacred>. Registration is essential, and preferably by 17 July.

Conference inquiries can be directed to Michael.griffith@acu.edu.au (9701 4192) or Elaine.lindsay@acu.edu.au (9739 2898). Post-graduate seminar inquiries to Dermot.nestor@acu.edu.au (9701 4510)

ACU is a NSW Institute of Teachers endorsed provider of professional development.

Financial support from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at ACU and from the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund is gratefully acknowledged.

