Margaret Allen

‘Rich and strange: the career of Mr Ottim Singh in White Australia’

Mr Ottim Singh, proprietor of ‘The People’s Store’, Kingscote KI from 1902-1927 made a number of sea-voyages between India, Australia and the Netherlands East Indies between c 1881 and 1927. During the course of these he crossed many beaches and boundaries. He lived in Australia from 1890 until his death in 1927. In this society he was marginal, indeed liminal. This paper explores the strategies and discourses which he, and other British Indian, could adopt in order to survive within White Australia.

Ron Blaber

Colonial Coastlines and ‘unsettled’ settlements

Coastlines are material and abstract. They cannot be made subject to the gaze. They are then unknowable and unsettling. The beach is material and specific; it can be made subject to the gaze, made knowable, perhaps even down to the grain of sand. It becomes familiar, even comfortable. Perhaps. However, once set in conjunction with the coastline, the ownership of the beach becomes unsettled.

In terms of colonial settlement the beach is unsettled in its function. It is a site of communication, be it promise or threat – just what does that sail on the horizon mean. In the everyday it is a site of arrival and departure, a gateway for the passage of people. But in the extreme, arrival is abandonment and departure rescue.

If we look at the US, Canada and Australia, why are these still predominantly seaboard cultures? Why are the words ‘hug’ or ‘cling’ used to describe a population’s relationship to the coast? Why this nexus between safety and fear?

This paper addresses these questions through a consideration of 4 cases of colonial coastlines/beaches – Crusoe’s island, Cook’s encounter in Hawaii, Marlow’s coastline in Heart of Darkness and the more mundane Mirvac fini development at Port Bouvard south of Perth.

Jonathan Bollen

White men, wet dreams: fishing, fatherhood and finitude in recent Australian theatre

At the end of Stephen Sewell’s play The Father We Loved On A Beach By The Sea (1978), we see Joe, a father of two sons, in the scene for which the play is named: dressed in bathing trunks and carrying a plastic bucket, he looks blankly out to sea; there is the sound of the surf and of children playing – but Joe, ‘the father we loved’, is impassive and unresponsive.

Scenes of masculine dissipation, of white men dissolute or dissolving between the sea and sky, have become a feature in recent Australian theatre. In John Misto’s monodrama Sky (1992), for instance, a father mourns the loss of his son who disappeared whilst flying solo over the sea. One explanation for the disappearance is that the pilot suffered from ‘the twilight syndrome’ where sea and sky look so alike that a pilot becomes disorientated and loses control of the plane. More recently, in Margery and Michael Forde’s James and Johnno (2004), two middle-aged brothers set out in a boat to scatter their father’s ashes on Moreton Bay, where the three of them once used to
fish. In Daniel Keene’s _To Whom It May Concern_ (1998), a 60-year-old father, at a loss what to do with his mentally disabled 40-year-old son, takes him to the beach and urges him into the water: ‘please Leo go in the water let the water take you please Leo’.

The relation between men and environment in these plays is no longer antagonistic, as it was, for instance, in the bush realism of earlier Australian plays. Rather, elemental exposure to the sea and the sky in these plays can have a restorative effect on men who are somehow incapacitated, at a loss or incomplete. In Neil Cole’s _Alive at Williamstown Pier_ (1999), for instance, a manic-depressive politician and father of two boys returns repeatedly to the pier, to a place between the sea and the sky, where he feels a kind of distanced at-one-ness with the world. While in Nick Enright and Justin Monjo’s adaptation of Tim Winton’s _Cloudstreet_ (1998), dreams about water, sky and stars and images of boats, beds and bathtubs create a richly fluid and immersive world for brothers Quick and Fish Lamb. Yet, in looking to the sea and the sky to project a future horizon for white masculinity, these plays inevitably turn their back on a land now indelibly scored by the history of inter-race relations.

This paper is drawn from ‘Marking masculinity in Australian theatre, 1955-1970 and 1985-2000’, an ARC Discovery project undertaken in collaboration with Adrian Kiernander and Bruce Parr.

**Moya Costello**

**At Home in Text on the Coast**

This paper links architect Philip Drew’s theory of Australian spatial culture, the Sydney section of Murray Bail’s novel _Holden’s Performance_, and a personal narrative about the importance of the coast and the concept of home to me. In his nonfiction trilogy _Leaves of Iron, Veranda_ and _The Coast Dwellers_ (plus the supplement, _Touch This Earth Lightly: Glenn Murcutt in His Own Words_), Drew considers that Australians ‘are a nation of coast dwellers and our culture is increasingly littoral’. He focuses on the topography of the coast, the architect Glenn Murcutt and the architecture of the veranda. I discuss these three things in turn. In his work, Drew draws on Australian visual and literary culture to support his thesis. Though Drew doesn’t mention Murray Bail in his particular referencing of Australia’s literary culture, the central section of Bail’s novel _Holden’s Performance_ invokes the typical coastal life of Sydney through one of its seaside suburbs, Manly. Bail parallels major passages in Holden’s life with references to synchronous national and international events. In this realm where fact and fiction intersect, my migratory path mimicked in reverse that of Holden’s: I grew up in Sydney and moved to Adelaide. I consider the coastal life of these two cities. I also draw on a number of writers/theorists and books such as Paul Carter on the nature of settlement. I also consider the boat as a container of desire in Kim Mahood’s _Craft for a Dry Lake_, and in particular images from visual artist Julie Adams’ thesis ‘Relics and Remnants of Desire’, and link these to similar symbols/images created in my own life.

**Caroline Ford**

‘Untamed and untamable’: Romanticism and the appeal of Sydney’s beaches in the nineteenth century

This paper considers those nineteenth century beachgoers for whom the natural scenery was the primary attraction for spending time on the coast near Sydney. It examines not only what they did on and around the beach, but also the ways in which they represented their experience there, and draws on the wealth of literature, from newspaper and journal articles to guidebooks to travel
journals, which rely heavily on romantic language to describe the surf, wind, cliffs, rocks and ocean views. But this paper also questions the sincerity of such accounts, arguing that rather than being ‘true romantics’ as they might have us think, these beachgoers were merely products of a society which valued the romantic appeal of nature.

Lucy Frost

**A ‘Quixotic Escapade’**

This paper narrates the tale of how a Spanish-speaking sailor with the unlikely name of Fortestado Santo arrived in Van Diemen’s Land in 1812 as a British transportee, and attempted to leave three years later on board a ship he and other escapees had built at Recherche Bay. Fragments of the story about this motley crew appear in British records from the Old Bailey and from Court Martials, as well as from colonial records and newspapers. There is also one extended, if highly suspect, account: John Pascoe Fawkner’s unpublished autobiography. In his manuscript, Fawkner tells of how he ‘fancifully agreed’ when young to help ‘foreigners’ escape ‘from the slavery of convictism’ by lending them his whaling boat for the first part of their journey, and spending the winter with them at Recherche Bay, building the ship they called the *Liberty*.

Chad Habel

**Christopher Koch: Crossing Over**

The notion of crossing over is central to Christopher Koch’s writing. This paper will explore Koch’s elaboration of liminal spaces in novels such as *Highways To A War* and *Out Of Ireland* as well as his non-fiction works *Crossing The Gap* and *The Many Coloured Land: A Return To Ireland*. In these works characters and speakers embark on adventures to Other places which are notably different to traditional adventure narratives of the nineteenth century. These ‘critical’ adventures enable reconfigurations of national and gender identities based on experiences of revolution, war, and personal tribulations. In so doing they disrupt the binary logic which pervades adventure traditions in English literature.

Rick Hosking

**‘We’re all going on a summer holiday’: the ins and outs of shack culture**

Within two or three decades of settlement, historical fictions began to appear in most of the Australian colonies, many of them ‘thrilling histories’, negotiating community memories of ‘paving the way’, that is, of foundation and pioneering. In South Australia a significant minority of such texts represent violent encounters between settlers and Indigenous people, encounters that take place on beaches. William Anderson Cawthorne’s novella *The Kangaroo Islanders* (1865) concludes with a representation of the 1836 murder of the protagonist Captain Meredith by two Kaurna (?) men on the beach at Yankalilla; he had gone ashore to find some shade and read his bible. Simpson Newland’s novel *Paving the Way: a Romance of the Australian Bush* (1893) begins with a representation of the wreck of the brigantine *Maria* in 1840 and the massacre by the Ngarrindjeri of all save one of the survivors on the Coorong beach; the protagonist Roland Grantley manages to escape death by running along the beach to the Murray Mouth. Both events have an historical basis; while community memories of these events helped maintain Manichean stereotypes of Indigenous people well into the nineteenth century and beyond, some justification for Indigenous resistance and retaliation is provided in both fictions. Both also propose a degree of ambivalence.
about the extent to which settling down has been possible over the intervening years. This paper will consider the beach as a contact zone, a place of encounter, contest and physical display, an anxious site of confrontation, confusion and misunderstanding.

**Sue Hosking**

*Paradise, absolutely Paradise. That’s what we think anyway*

The weekender, whether shack or second leisure home, has long been part of the Australian dream. The desire to escape from the pressures of daily occupations, paid work and the conventions of orderly urban and suburban life has manifest itself in different forms along the coastlines of Australia: shack communities; recreational towns; pseudo-resorts. Traditionally the week-ender by the beach is conceived as a place of freedom.

This paper looks at two stories set in holiday homes by the sea: Patrick Whites Dead Roses and Elizabeth Harrowers The Beautiful Climate. The stories play with and contest the usual conceptions of the spaces of the holiday home by the beach.

**Heather Johnson**

*Other People’s Oceans: Cultural and Geographical Displacements and the Sea as Death*

Poets tend to draw from past memories and present emotions to create that authentic moment. Those of a cross-geographical nature may utilise scenery that varies from one country to the next. Though the setting can be ambiguous and unimportant to the reader, it may be entirely obvious and symbolic to the writer. Looking back on my poems, particularly those that have been published and therefore include me in the discussion as ‘poet’, I find that my sea-side settings inspired by my American surroundings (my ‘home’) reflect themes of rebirth while those that are inspired by my Australian-adopted home reflect themes of death. This, to me, is fascinating since I prefer Australia to America and have no desire to return ‘home’. Though the actual crossing of the Pacific Ocean indicates an instance of rebirth, the opposite is reflected in my poems. I wish to present a paper that explores the concept of the sea as death in the writing of a culturally and geographically displaced poet.

**Anna Johnston and Ralph Crane**

*Exploring Cultural Contact: Flora Annie Steel and the Punjab*

Under the aegis of empire, individuals from diverse positions within diverse cultures were brought together in conditions which, as Mary Louise Pratt argues, were interactive, improvisational, and characterised by radically asymmetrical relations of power. This paper examines the writer and Anglo-Indian memsahib Flora Annie Steel, and particularly her *Tales from the Punjab*, as a case study of the contact zone between imperialism, anthropology, and folklore. Steel’s collection of juvenile stories provides an opportunity to explore the folklore movement in relation to anthropology, and to elucidate the importance of empire writing for younger audiences. It also enables us to think about the role of imperial women and their writing in relation to broader debates about imperial history, biography, and anthropology, and about how we might look again at such figures in order to explore the multiplicity of cultural contact under colonial conditions.
Bridget Jolly

Spinning tops and experimental plots

An agricultural produce railway was once anticipated to traverse Kangaroo Island’s broad back. The marine craft on which the Island depended for physical contact with the ‘outer’ world might thereby have been linked to a facility discussed by a Royal Commission, 1909–1911, and by Islanders and others for some years before and after.

Western Kangaroo Island’s progress in those years of deliberation included the initial publication of the Kangaroo Island Courier, the first run of the SS Karatta, the opening of the quite exceptional Ozone Hotel, and start of work on the Cape du Couedic lighthouse site (all in 1907); the landing of the first traction engine on the Island, and the state government’s wooing of Scottish fishermen and their families for closer settlement at American River (both in 1908); the opening of Kingscote’s new jetty (1910); and the first agricultural show (at Kingscote, 1911).

The railway might have been another ‘French connection’ for the Island: although no Très Grande Vitesse (even by standards of the time), the animal-powered monorail of a French engineer, Caillet, vied momentarily for acceptance with the gyroscopically-stabilised monorail of the Irish inventor, Brennan.

The deliberations of Royal Commissions on several mainland state railways kept alive Islanders’ hope for rail transport to a Nepean Bay or American River port. But on this depended expeditious government productivity-testing of the ironstone country. Experimental agricultural plots begun (1908) to test the ‘new’ country the rail would serve, and an experimental farm of 1915 became unwitting precursors of the Island’s post-World War II soldier settlement.

Brennan’s monorail was early dismissed by Australian governments: its utopian-seeming ‘sci-fi’ excesses dampened any ardour. Yet had this visionary design or Caillet’s ‘portable’ monorail been adopted on the Island, it might still perhaps take visitors to the Flinders Chase reserve— one benefit that the Snug Cove settler John Hirst believed would accrue from a railway. The deeply divided views at this time on the expansion of the Chase were one of several interdependent concerns awakened by the possibility of a railway.

Ben Kooyman

Dark fantasy, darker reality: allegories of renaissance England and the (lost) New World in three comic books

V For Vendetta (1981–1988) and Hellblazer (1987–2005) present pessimistic portraits of Britain: Vendetta presents an Orwellian future Britain gutted by fascism, while Hellblazer presents a nightmarish vision of a decaying Albion. I believe that the institutional evil of the fictional British societies presented in these comic books closely resembles the historical reality of Elizabethan-Jacobean England. Two significant historical figures in particular stand out as archetypes for the protagonists of these comics. John Constantine, the dark magician/sorcerer of Hellblazer, resembles Christopher Marlowe, while the dangerous and charismatic anarchist V resembles (indeed, imitates) Guy Fawkes.

Hellblazer and Vendetta are liminal fictions (indeed the medium itself is liminal, a space between art, literature, and film that plays with and borrows from the iconography of all three), and the fact that these alternate Englands resemble, and contain traces of, the violent and sinister historical reality of Elizabethan-Jacobean England, a state that destroyed ideological threats like Marlowe and Fawkes, testifies to a hopeless cyclical nature.
But there’s a striking difference between historical reality and comic book fantasy, which will be examined using, as a framing device, <em>Marvel 1602</em> (2003). In this comic book, the New World, thousands of miles away across the ocean, represents hope, redemption, and spiritual rebirth. The New World, the sea, and the beach, in both history and fiction, were/are symbols of hope and discovery for Renaissance England, iconic of previously unrealised freedom, distant but palpable. But while in that England such hope lay beyond the threshold of the ocean, in the fictional modern/future Englands of <em>Vendetta</em> and <em>Hellblazer</em> there is no New World: the world of today/tomorrow is closed, sealed, finite, and the idea of a rich alternate world beyond the sea is dead, or hauntingly evanescent...

**Gay Lynch (reading)**

**Peter Manthorpe- ‘The Saline Solution’**

**Michele McCrea**

For decades it was just a holiday house in a lonely place that wasn’t even a town - merely a straggle of houses and a few shops along the cliff road. In summer the empty houses filled up with families, and children and dogs ran joyfully in the shallow water. In winter you hardly saw a soul, or heard a thing - except the wind, the birds and the coughing bark of a fox as it made its way home across the paddocks before dawn.

Then real estate prices went crazy and everyone wanted a piece of the coast. Expensive dwellings sprang up along the esplanade, and further inland, massive housing developments swelled the population, until our little town was swallowed up by the suburbs.

Hoons raced up and down our once-quiet road in noisy cars. The empty block next door where I first learned to drive was occupied by a family of four in a too-big house with a swimming pool in the backyard and a stone dolphin out the front. The father was a loud obnoxious man with a passion for power tools.

Our house seemed an incongruous relic but we clung to it fiercely, lamenting the changes, like sailors clinging to a wreck, cursing the storm and the sea that’s drowning them.

I look out now at the tossing sea and the waving trees. I never want to leave this house, I want to live here forever and sew and make my sculptures. I don’t have to go anywhere; I can just look at the sea.

I look at the sea from the deck of a ship that stands firm on the earth. Our house is like a ship. It was built by an engineer who loved boats: it has wooden stairs and banisters with brass fittings, and a balcony the width of a boat deck. The ground floor was once a boatshed and the upstairs, captain’s quarters.

I make a mug of tea and scan my surroundings, first the room I am in and then, in ever-widening circles, the rooms that surround it, and the rooms of the past that lie behind them in thick layers, going all the way back to when I was nine years old.
John McLaren

Kingdoms of Neptune: seas, bays, estuaries and the dangers of reading skua poetry (it may embed in your skull)

Although Australia has always played a major role in Pacific affairs, the people and places of the Pacific have played little part in shaping its imagination. Australians, in contrast to New Zealanders, have looked to Neptune’s inland realm, searching for a sea that did not exist, exploring, draining and polluting rivercourses, or paddling by the shores of the threatening ocean. When Louis Becke sailed forth, he found only islands in an ocean, not an ocean of islands, and brought back tales of cannibals, pirates and blackbirders. Kenneth Slessor watches the sea-captains from the shore. Allen Curnow wrote of Tasman as navigator, Slessor wrote of Cook as technician, preparing the way for poets to write in Australia. Vance Palmer set a novel among fishermen in The Passage, but the estuary where his characters work is only a background to the lives they lead on shore. Thea Astley ventured into the Pacific in her Beachmasters, but in the book she kept to her island, and when she returned to Australia she had a deluge sweep her bolder characters out into the oceans, where they were heard of no more. Tim Winton took on Melville’s whale and whalers, but again his action was confined to the shore, as it is in Dirt Music, another novel of a fisherman. Against this background, this paper will explore the way Robert Adamson chooses to inhabit the littoral as liminal between sea and land and between the history of Australia and the pressures of the globe.

Brian Matthews

‘Packin’ Heat at Bojangles: Low Life and High Life on the St Kilda Littoral’

Melbourne’s beachside suburb, St Kilda, offers one of the more interesting littoral spaces. The colonial holiday retreat of the wealthy (The beautiful shores of our bay have become a resort of numerous parties from town Charles Harpur, 1841), St Kilda retains its leafy, architecturally splendid character on its eastern side away from the coast but the littoral became a mix of English seaside resort, Australian laid back democratic and the vaguely, sometimes nakedly, criminal as the life of St Kilda’s western back streets and the infamous Fitzroy Street overflowed onto the deceptively sunny, peaceful sands. Then there was and now resurrected St Kilda’s endlessly controversial Baths (many of the sights have been . . . obscene and disgusting Constable 9536, February 1946), the stingray plague, the Memorial picture theatre with its endless diet of horrors and as-near-to-pornographic pics as the proprietors dared, and the nightclubs and brothels fought over by the strong-arm men of each era, all within a stones throw of the glittering bay and the lapping waves and the bathing children and their mothers. A great mix which, in this paper, I document, describe and speculate on.

Russell McDougall & Julian Croft (jointly authored, but delivered by RMCd)

The Coal Littoral: Lakeland Transhumance

This paper will examine the social narratives of coal mining from the 1930s to the 1960s relating work underground in the Hunter Valley to the holiday littoral of Lake Macquarie and the Tuggerah Lakes. Drawing upon oral history sources as well as more formal historical and literary narratives,
we look at the integration of the industrial culture of mining with the fishing holiday as a form of pastoralism.

Kay Merry

**FIRST WAVE: Encounters between Europeans and indigenous Australians on the shores and beaches of southern Australia**

For two centuries, from the 1640s, indigenous Australians were confronted with the arrival of a succession of Dutch, English and French maritime expeditions, explorers, sealers and shipwreck victims on various beaches and, at times, simply observed them from concealed vantage points along the shoreline of southern Australia.

When contact did occur, the indigenous people were initially curious and cordial towards the visitors but, unfortunately, cultural ignorance and misunderstandings on each side often culminated into conflict and, sometimes, tragedy. In this paper I aim to examine some of the earliest encounters along the shores of southern Australia from both European and, where possible, indigenous Australian perspectives.

Stephen Muecke

**Indian Ocean Poetry**

I will present some texts, talk pieces, which engage with the Indian Ocean region. Each presents an argument and tells a story, so to that extent they fit into a fictocritical mode. Post-orientalism is about relocating Baudelaire in the Indian Ocean, where he is literally immersed in 1843. The piece proposes that Said's orientalism, with its politics of representation, fails to account for the infectious power of poetry. ‘Jerome’s Happy Hour’ is the story of the demise of reef-fishing in Mauritius in the 1970s, as Britain tries to modernise the fishing industry there. Jerome resists by drinking sweet rum coco. Finally, Paul and Virginia borrows the epic narrative style of Broome storyteller Paddy Roe to re-tell this French rouseauian romance in a contemporary creole style.

Christine Nicholls

**Something rich and strange: Robin Best’s Open Cut and Marine Forms**

In his recent book What’s Wrong With Contemporary Art?, Peter Timms argues that:

...*[t]hroughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s, a great deal of discussion about ceramics centred around the need to establish an identifiably Australian tradition. [Bernard] Leach seemed to offer a way to achieve this, not only by means of the abstract idea that the

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crafts were capable of reflecting the moral status of a culture, but through his advocacy of a ‘great exchange’ between East and West, leading to a new cultural synthesis.

An Australian pottery tradition could therefore be constructed by adapting Australian ideas about responsiveness to locality and the particular nature of various materials and applying them to the local landscape. This marrying of Oriental philosophies to local Australian conditions was perfectly in keeping with Leach’s desire for cultural reconciliation.

And so it came about that something recognisably Australian developed from an eccentrically English response to Korean and Chinese styles and Japanese aesthetics. (Timms, 2004:136).

Timms goes on to write that in Australia by the 1990s, when Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating was urging Australians to think of ourselves as part of Asia, this cultural re-orientation resulted in a genuine exchange of ideas and values between Australian and Asian, particularly Japanese, ceramicists. Potters visited each other’s countries for extended periods, learning from one another. Timms also asserts that such cultural exchange was founded upon mutual respect, thus avoiding the excesses of ‘jingoistic nationalism’ or the expression of crudely parochial nationalist ideals - a charge that he has levelled at Bernard Leach. (Ibid, pp 135-136).

Robin Best is a South Australian ceramicist who has spent considerable time on cultural exchanges in various parts of Asia as well as in the Pitjantjatjara Lands of northern South Australia. In this powerpoint presentation I will examine two bodies of Best’s work, ‘Marine Forms’ and ‘Open Cut’. These works have been inspired by Australian underwater marine life, and by the coastal area in and around the Fleurieu Peninsula. I will discuss Best’s work in terms of the conference themes and also with reference to the oeuvre of certain other contemporary Australian ceramicists.

In my paper I will argue that the approaches and cultural practices of some contemporary Australian ceramicists (including Robin Best) provide a template for other Australian artists and artistic forms (including literature, the performing arts and music). By ‘thinking locally, acting globally’, and by their open acknowledgement and respect for other cultural traditions and approaches and in their eschewal of appropriation, a number of contemporary Australian ceramicists and other visual artists are making works of a beauty that is indeed rich and strange. But they are simultaneously and perhaps unexpectedly creating a kind of surplus value: the productive cultural synthesis upon which their artistic accomplishment is founded is also making an important contribution towards bridging the existential gap between Australia and Asia. Finally, I will speculate upon possible reasons for this.

Maria Nugent

From landing place to meeting place: Telling stories of the encounter between Captain Cook and local indigenous people at Botany Bay in 1770

In 2000 the public reserve on the southern shore of Botany Bay, which since 1899 had been known as Captain Cook’s Landing Place, was renamed the Meeting Place Precinct. The name change from landing place to meeting place reflects the broader project of reconciliation, which has at its heart concepts such as shared history and shared heritage. It is in this context that efforts have been made by the authorities responsible for managing the historic reserve at Botany Bay (now part of the Botany Bay National Park) to reinterpret its national heritage significance in terms of it being a foundational site for the meeting of cultures as opposed to the origin point for British colonisation of the territory, which is how it had been inscribed and interpreted for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This paper examines this recent development within the context of a much
longer history about Botany Bay’s use as a site for Australian story-telling about British possession and Aboriginal dispossession.

The paper reflects on some of challenges of writing a new history of the site, which will inform the future public presentation of the area’s historical significance. In so doing, I revisit the actual encounter that occurred between Cook’s men and local people in 1770, using insights gained from ethnographic studies belonging to other times and places. I argue that the re-inscription of Botany Bay as a foundational site for cross-cultural meetings masks the notable absence of any proper meeting occurring between voyager and locals during the week or so Captain Cook and his crew were in the bay. Yet, it is in the very absence of a proper meeting between the locals and voyagers that one can see most clearly expressions of indigenous sovereignty on the one hand and the imperatives of the voyagers on the other. Therefore I suggest that greater attention to what Nicholas Thomas has described as ‘the failure of communication’ that took place at Botany Bay in 1770 provides a much stronger foundation for the contemporary use of the site for telling historical stories that might foster reconciliation because this acknowledges the frustrated efforts of the locals to deal on their own terms with the strangers. For this reason, thinking about Botany Bay in 1770 as a place of ‘no meeting’ rather than of ‘meeting’ might ultimately be more productive for now achieving a type of rapprochement between black and white and between past and present.

Rebecca Pannell

Time for a Sea Change

One of the most successful television series ever produced in this country is ABC TV’s Sea Change. Why? What qualities, themes and narratives made this a serial that viewers clung to every Sunday night for years?

This paper will discuss the ways in which the themes and the character narratives were closely tied to landscape, seascape, place and placing in the series. In particular it will focus on the character of water and intertextual references that resonate in Australian film and television. How was the ‘beach’ as Australian icon disrupted/ reinforced in this particularly Australian text? What ‘encounters’ happened on and off screen?

Time permitting; you may even get a glance of Summer Bay (Home and Away) and other ‘Aussie soaps’ set along the coastline.

Michael Savvas

Errol Flynn’s Lifelong Relationship

Errol Flynn is remembered for a number of things, but generally not for his writing. Yet throughout his adult life he wrote works that were entertaining, imaginative and interesting. Esteemed academic Stephen Knight wrote of Flynn’s novel Showdown that ‘the fluent technique might cause some surprise.’

Flynn also had a lifelong relationship with the sea, and frequently wrote about his feelings towards it. I will be discussing this relationship as seen through Flynn’s writings. I will be referring to Flynn’s articles for The Bulletin as a correspondent, along with his books Beam Ends, Showdown and My Wicked, Wicked Ways.
Sue Sheridan

Some Versions of Coastal: Thea Astley, Captain Simpson and the North Queensland Coast

Why isn’t there a literary form called ‘the coastal’, equivalent to the pastoral? If the pastoral enables images of simplicity and innocence to be explored, and counterposed to other modes of representation (William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral), what might ‘coastal’ writing do? I have chosen two of the many possible versions of ‘coastal’ in Australian writing, both of them having as their geo-political point of reference the far north Queensland coast. This coast appears, from the perspective of the inland rain shadow country, as a mirage of bliss, in Thea Astley’s Drylands; and, from a mariner’s perspective, it appears as a dangerous edge, in Captain Beckford Simpson’s journal of his journey with Jacky Jacky to search for the remains of the explorer Edmund Kennedy.

Kirpal Singh

WATER AS SEEN THROUGH DIFFERENT EYES: Reflections on Multi-Cultural Responses to the SEA

For centuries poets and writers (and other kindred spirits such as artists) have been responding to water and to the waters of the SEA. In an age when cross-cultural engagements are very real and therefore under great strains of sensitivity as well as possible misunderstanding it becomes imperative that all efforts be made to try and see how people from differing cultural backgrounds look at things. I thought I might offer, as a contribution to this overall agenda, the ways in which three different cultural *types* look at water: the christian, the hindu, and the muslim. I will be using various literary (and one or two non-literary) passages for this purpose and hope that my listeners will help enlarge this theme through their own ‘take’ on my position. As they say the SEA beckons but only the chosen survive its vastness.

Anna Solding

Tragic Beach

What is it about the sea that attracts tragedy in writing? Why are we so fascinated with reading about the dangerous forces of water?

Tim Winton’s writings of the beach and the sea are often celebratory, elated love songs to a place where the writer feels at home. Yet some of the most tragic events also take place in that same beach environment. Accidents where characters almost drown are a recurring theme in Winton’s texts. His characters seldom venture far from the coast. Swimming, fishing and contemplating life in silence, looking out over the water, comes naturally to them. Even though they are aware of the dangers of the sea, they are constantly drawn to it.

In my paper I intend to explore the tragic aspects in Winton’s writings of the beach and its culture and in turn compare them with those in my own manuscript. One of my stories, set in Sweden, shows a Muslim immigrant’s first encounter with the beach in the city where she has lived for over twenty years. For Swedes in general the beach is a place of fun and relaxation, much the same way that it is for Australians, but for Nassrin it signifies so much more. I intend to explore the significance of the sea in my own writing while contrasting and comparing it to the way Winton uses it in some of his most potent works.
Tracy Spencer

*Getting off the verandah*: decolonising Australia

The verandah has been employed as a Christian cultural icon of reconciliation, where ‘East meets West, North meets South’. Postcolonial reading of the verandah in Australian history reveals it is a domestic space inscribed by colonial ideologies of separation of indigenous and non-indigenous people. However, the desire expressed in Pickard’s contextual theology is for national redemption through the ‘meeting’ together of separated peoples, and so situates this theology within the wider discourses of reconciliation, both within Australian culture and Christian theology. This paper examines potentially redemptive ‘meetings’ of Indigenous and settler Australians, drawing particularly on the engagements of Jim Page and Rebecca Forbes in the Adnyamathanha community of the northern Flinders in the 1930s-50s. Through Adnyamathanha accounts of their ‘meeting’, characteristics emerge that suggest new formulations of settler identity that resist colonial / ‘indigenous’ oppositions, and might best be understood within contemporary discourses of decolonisation which renegotiate roles of host, stranger and guest on and off the Australian verandah.

Paul Sutton

*An Apology for the Canon*

In the sea of texts that surround us today, a sea that is expanding daily with no signs of shrinking, one cannot possibly read everything anymore. Yet, everyday, we make decisions about what is worth reading and what is not worth reading. The canon, traditionally, has been the established beach that has formed the stable contact point for a reader to dip into the sea of texts that surrounds them. As beaches are capable of erosion, so does the canon erode over time as texts are lost - Library of Alexandria anyone? – but the beach is also added to. People continue to write and while Joyce, Woolf, Dickinson and Whitman were once tenuous grains added to the beach, they are now firmly ingrained in the Canon. However, the Canon has come under attack and the words of Ariel do not supply any hope. ‘Nothing of him that doth fade/But doth suffer a sea-change/Into something rich and strange.’ For any text from history, if it is ‘full fathom five’ it is unlikely to ever see the light of day again and they will fade from memory and life. This paper is an apology, in the sense of apology as defence, of the Canon. An apology marshalled around the need to stop the sea eroding the foundations of the beach that modern texts are washed up on. As the sea of texts grows greater, we, as critics or writers, need those dead white men more than ever.

Helen Tiffin

*Sharks and the Australian imaginary*

Representation of animals and environments is increasingly understood to have played and to continue to play a major role in conservation. Public support, neglect, or outright vilification, is often based on the ways in which animals and habitats are described, and is hence crucial to species survival.

This paper will consider the ways in which sharks are routinely depicted in the media, fiction, illustrations, scientific studies and cartoons. In so doing it will attempt to account for the incommensurability between actual harm done to humans by sharks and the extreme fear(s) they generate.
Although the paper focuses on Australian representations, Western attitudes to sharks and contact history between sharks, and other groups of humans will be mentioned.

Graham Tulloch

*Scott and Stevenson on the Beach*

Annie Werner

*‘Savage Printers’: Beachcombing, Tattoos and Liminality in James O’Connell’s Residence*

In 1836, *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands* was published in Boston. The subject and narrator of the text, James F. O’Connell, was alternately known as a sailor, a traveler, a rogue, even a pirate, and later in his life, when he returned to Europe, he appeared in circuses as a man ‘tattooed by savages’. In this paper, I will explore the way that, in becoming an indigenously tattooed white man, O’Connell straddled the boundary between civilization and savagery. His experiences as a beachcomber in Ponape were literally inscribed upon him and, just as he had transgressed cultural boundaries in crossing the beach, so too was his own boundary – his skin – transgressed by what Vanessa Smith has identified as an ‘alien aesthetic’.

Though modern scholars have shown O’Connell’s narrative to be at least partially fictionalized, it is still a valuable document, though not as the ‘first published, circumstantial history of a community of Oceanic Indians’ as the editor claimed. Rather, O’Connell’s narrative stands as an active engagement with a colonialist discourse that surrounded the notions of liminality and transgression that the beachcombers embodied. O’Connell’s *Residence* is a clear example of a text that engages not only with the conventions of a new and emerging genre of popular literature, but also with the greater dialogues involving colonialist definitions of civilization and savagery.

In this paper, I will offer a textual analysis of O’Connell’s narrative that explores his position as a liminal figure. More explicitly though, I will consider the added implications of his status as an indigenously tattooed white man. Just as O’Connell transgressed boundaries between identities, the indigenous ink that was injected into his skin both transformed and translated his own corporeal racialisation.

Richard White

*Beach holidays*

The prominence of the beach in Australian culture has become something of a cliché, but the particular role of the beach holiday, as distinct from the more elaborate culture of the city beach, has received less attention. This paper sketches the rise and fall of the family beach holiday in Australia. It emerged in the late nineteenth century, justified largely as a healthy escape from the city, and represented a different negotiation of nature and culture and the body from that found at Bondi, St Kilda or Glenelg. By the 1930s a holiday at the beach was still a fairly exclusive status symbol, though it was being prescribed for deprived rural children with the same enthusiasm that a bush holiday had been prescribed for their city slum counterparts. After World War II, with mass car and home ownership, the focus on family life and increasing availability of annual leave, the
beach holiday had its heyday, in camping grounds, holiday cabins, flats and weekenders strung around the Australian coast – and Harold Holt celebrating his capacity to run the nation lying on a banana chair in Portsea. But from the 1970s it began to lose its significance as a shared experience. The annual holiday was transformed by the two-income family and a new work culture. The Australian beach holiday became daggy; beach holidays went off-shore and became identified with pampering, status and activity rather than the joy of doing nothing. And this is the genius of John Howard’s annual holiday at Hawk’s Nest, a perfect example of the smoke and mirrors of the Howard ascendancy.